

COBALT-SERIES

谷 瑞恵

伯爵と妖精

運命の赤い糸を信じますか？

集英社

Hakushaku to Yousei

vol.15: Do you believe in the red string of
destiny?

by Takaboshi Asako

[Novel Updates](#)

Translator: [Daydream Translations](#)

Epub: [Trollo WN/LN EPUB](#)



エドガー

貴族の家に生まれたが、プリンス率いる謎の組織に売り飛ばされ、苛酷な運命を経た後に、リディアの協力で青騎士伯爵の地位を手に入れる。プリンスへの復讐をひとまず果たすが、彼の「記憶」を受け継いだまま、リディアと結婚することになるが…。

ケルピー

リディアの昔なじみの妖精。本来は凶暴な性格だが、リディアには優しい。エドガーの「秘密」を知りながら、リディアを見守ることに…。

伯爵と妖精

【登場人物紹介】



ニコ

猫の姿をした妖精。
リディアの幼なじみ
で相棒。ふてぶてし
い性格だが、身なり
や食事にはうるさく、
紳士を気取っている。

リディア

妖精の姿が見え、話もでき
る少女。エドガーに妖精博
士として雇われ、あまい口
説き言葉に振り回されてき
たが、プリンスと戦うエド
ガーの力になりたいと思う
自分に気づき、彼のプロポ
ーズを受け入れる。

レイヴン

エドガーの従者で、神秘的
な雰囲気のある少年。武術は相
当な腕を持ち、主人には完
璧に忠実。エドガーとリデ
ィアの結婚を喜んでいる。

Chapter 1: A mysterious present and a servant's trial

Raven was Lord Edgar Ashenbert's attendant.

His work began early in the morning. After waking up, first ensuring that his master's schedule is recorded in mind, he cleans up the dressing room before his master wakes up, then he tidies the washbasin, prepares the hot water, polishes his shoes in advance, and then confirms that there were no problems with the shirts sent by the laundry maid. The maid was nervous as he wasn't going to miss any faint crease lines.

Because he had an exotic appearance, brown skin, and a baby face which did not seem nineteen years old, there would be new maids who were not yet teenagers, who were interested in him, but before long, everyone would find that he was actually quite strange.

He exuded an unusual atmosphere; not only did he not smile, he also wouldn't talk to anyone if it was unnecessary.

As the attendant highly respected his master, the maids taking care of the master's possessions needed to be very careful.

A few days ago, there was a maid who burnt the master's necktie, and although she was only silently being stared at by Raven, she thought she was going to die.

Overall, despite Raven being extremely taciturn, when the depths of his dark eyes flashed green, it made people feel terrified as it was unknown what those

eyes were concealing.

The laundry maid on duty today should also be one of the people who feared Raven. While waiting for Raven to check, she anxiously averted her gaze.

Raven found an area where the maid did a bad job and sighed.

“There are still wrinkles, please straighten it out.”

After handing the shirt back to her, the maid suddenly cried.

“I--I--I’m sorry...!”

The maid held the shirt with trembling hands and ran away in an instant.

Raven had never lashed out at maids or yelled at them, but without knowing why, he had always made them cry even when he made an honest request.

He had no idea why he made the maids cry, but he also believed that thinking of the reason wasn’t his job, so he would just silently move on to the next task.

He brushed the morning coat and prepared the cufflinks and tie pins.

While he was working, he heard the sound of the main entrance’s doorbell.

There weren’t any guests that would pay a visit first thing in the morning. However, the doorbell rang twice, then on the third time.

Perhaps no one else had heard it. The butler might be in the basement's red wine cellar. Raven thought as he left the room.

Although the master's room was quite far from the main entrance, Raven's ears should be the most sensitive in the mansion.

He hurried to the main entrance hall, opened the door lock, and used both hands to pull open the heavy door.

In result, a strong gust of wind blew in. An abundance of tree leaves fluttered into the main entrance hall, as if a sudden wind blew in the forest.

After the wind had finally ceased, Raven looked outside and saw a tall gentleman wearing a black coat standing in front of him, raising his head and sticking out his chest.

"Excuse me, is this the Blue Knight Earl's mansion?"

This person's hat was pulled down quite low so his appearance couldn't be seen and the cane in his hand was a branch.

"Yes, sir."

Raven swept the leaves off his hair and shoulders and answered politely.

Earl Ashenbert's formal title was Earl of Ibrazel; the Blue Knight Earl was known as an ancient name and up until this era, the human world had not used this title.

Those who called Raven's master the "Blue Knight Earl" were probably fairies.

As he thought that, he asked cautiously:

"May I ask who you are?"

"In the past, I had a pretty good relationship with the Earl."

The more he tried to make out the man's features, the more his appearance seemed to be blurred and surrounded by mist, making one unable to remember any of his features.

"Today, I'm delivering a heartfelt congratulatory gift, please accept it."

He handed Raven a small package and left, no, he ought to have disappeared. Raven had been staring at the package and when he looked up, the man was already gone.

"Raven, who was that just now?"

The head butler Tomkins came into the entrance hall. After Raven told him what happened, his short and stout body shook as he laughed and said:

"My my, that fairy tribe is still unexpectedly heavy on friendship. Ever since the master announced his engagement, strange gifts have often been delivered here.

"Strange?"

"Fruits which seem to be out of season, butter and honey that can't be reduced in size, tablecloths woven from spider threads, and necklaces made from morning dew and leafs that became gold coins the next day. Well, these sorts of things."

“...I see.”

“Well then, what is it this time?”

Tomkins picked up the parcel from Raven’s hands, with his short web like fingers from his merrow blood. Although he tried giving the parcel a gentle shake, he tilted his head in confusion and returned the parcel to Raven.

“Take this to the master.”

“Yes.”

“By the way, help me inform Mrs. Lane later, tell her that the leaves here need to be swept out.”

After taking a look at the abundant leaves that have accumulated in the main entrance hall, Raven nodded.

This mansion’s master --- Edgar Ashenbert was officially engaged recently. Although he finally made the engagement public, he could now also take his beloved fiancée in and out of society, but when it came to whether or not he was in a good mood everyday, it seems that it wasn’t always the case.

As he had breakfast under Raven’s service as usual, he seemed to have suddenly remembered something and mumbled:

“Lydia won’t be coming today as well.”

Edgar’s fiancée --- Miss Lydia Carlton, was the Earl family’s advising fairy doctor. She was an unusual girl who was well very acquainted with fairies.

“Duchess Masefield entrusted the royal gown shop to custom make a dress for Miss Lydia, so she is at Masefield mansion to have her measurements taken.”

“Measurements....I really want to be there and watch too.”

He said and he turned towards Raven.

“Raven, what were you imagining just now?”

“....No, nothing.”

“It’s okay Raven, even if you imagine Lydia in her underwear, I won’t take offence.”

He revealed a perfect smile with his flawless appearance. This young earl, who possessed dazzling blonde hair and alluring ash mauve eyes was adept at showing a smile, but only those close to him knew that he was actually a scarier person in comparison to Raven, who didn’t smile.

Raven would only attack enemies in front of him, but as for Edgar, as long as it was someone who wasn’t pleasing to his eye, he would thrust them down to hell no matter where they tried to escape to.

“So, what’s she like?”

“What?”

“Your imagination of Lydia.”

Despite Raven often being teased in this way, he didn’t feel like he was being teased. He was merely loyal to his master whenever possible.

As long as he was asked to, he would do his utmost to imagine.

On the other hand, Edgar was quite satisfied seeing Raven having modest secrets concealed from him and showing a perplexed expression like an ordinary person. For Edgar, teasing Raven was well worth it.

“Ahh, anyways, we are already undoubtedly engaged, I somehow feel that the time I spend with Lydia is less than before.”

Edgar mumbled alone, leaving Raven still troubled over the imagination matter.

Before, Lydia came to mansion everyday as the advising fairy doctor, so he was always able to see her when he wanted to, but now, not only was she occupied with wedding preparations, even as a fiancée it was difficult for them to be alone together whenever he took her out in public.

Thinking about this, Edgar remembered something. Come to think of it, when they attended the club's ball not long ago, he made Lydia angry.

To Edgar, these matters were merely trivial, yet it's possible that Lydia was still angry; he had completely forgotten about this point. Lydia's personality was the kind that would unexpectedly mind trivial matters.

After several days, Edgar became busy and so he wasn't able to have a proper chat with her. Realizing this, he felt a little bothered.

He put down the fork and looked at Raven.

He then called for the motionless attendant, who frowned a little and still seemed to be troubled.

“Raven, can you pour tea for me?”

After receiving new orders, Raven knew that he could finally be released from the question from just a moment ago, and thus he picked up the teapot hastily.

“Lord Edgar, a congratulatory gift was sent this morning, would you like to take a look?”

Perhaps having determined that his master’s meal had come to an end, Raven brought up the topic.

“Who sent it?”

“It ought to have been a fairy.”

“Open it for me.”

After opening up the parcel, a small wooden case appeared. It seemed to contain something like a small seed.

“What kind of seed is this? I’ve haven’t seen this kind of shape before.”

Edgar picked up the seed, rolled it around and examined it. It was yellowish green, much like a round walnut seed.

“Something is written inside.”

Raven looked at inside of the lid.

“It says ‘do not plant’.”

“What’s that all about? To go as far as to send something that can’t be planted.”

“I do not know.”

Raven also tilted his head.

“Then I have no choice but to plant it, this way I’ll know why.”

With regards to Raven, his mind didn’t have the option of stopping Edgar

from jumping to this sort of thought, because his master's words were absolute.

"May I ask if it will be dangerous?"

"Dangerous? Don't tell me that this seed can attack people?"

Edgar jokingly replied.

"Something will probably sprout. Alright, I'll plant this in the flower pot and take a look."

Edgar stood up. Raven hastily stopped him and said:

"Lord Edgar, please allow me."

"What? there's no need, it'll be fine if I call the gardener to prepare the pot."

"No, because it is unknown as to what will happen, it will be troublesome if an incident were to occur by chance."

"You're saying that it'll be troublesome if the seed attacks people by chance?"

Although Edgar laughed, Raven was very serious and was unwilling to back off from his master.

"Please allow me."

This time, Raven was not going to give up easily. For him, an attendant's work wasn't an occupation, but rather a duty. He firmly believed that he had to use his life to protect his master.

It was also because he was a descendant of one of the small Ceylon tribes,

moreover legends say that he had a sprite living within his body.

If that tribe was prospering as a small kingdom, and the nature of the frightening and murderous fairy stayed in Raven's body, then he would have possessed the majestic status of the king's soldier.

However, the kingdom from long ago no longer existed and after going through various ordeals, Raven was saved by Edgar and thus considered him to be his only king.

He was born possessing outstanding combat abilities, the more blood that was shed, the more stimulated the spirit that cannot suppress its serial murderous behaviour became, and it would also only obey the king. Due to staying by Edgar's side, Raven began to gradually recover into a teenager, rather than a brutal warrior.

Although he had never communicated with others since growing up and was also unable to understand human emotions, he had slowly begun to turn his attention to others apart from his master.

But for him, his master was everything to him; this sort of cognition was not easy to change.

"I understand, I'll leave it to you then. Let me know if there's a change."

*

"Hey, are you really in love with Earl Ashenbert?"

At the dinner party a few days before, there was an extraordinarily beautiful

lady who had spoken to Lydia.

It was said that those gathered in that club were all misfits in society, but regardless of who they were, Lydia saw them as decent ladies and gentlemen of the upper class.

Nevertheless, it seemed that this was the first time she was being shamelessly asked in this way.

“Was I too rude? But you seem a little unhappy with him.

”

This was because Lydia wasn't used to the social circles, so she was always very nervous. Moreover, she thought that an unmarried couple being intimate in public wasn't too good.

Edgar could hardly control himself in this aspect and Lydia often felt very embarrassed, so she was forced to defend herself.

However, since she misunderstood that the two of them weren't happy lovers because of Lydia's attitude, would this woman be interested in Edgar? Perhaps they've been acquainted.

Edgar was a philanderer who was good at flirting, but he was possessed conspicuous good looks, thus he was often involved in scandalous affairs. In the end, it was unclear to Lydia how many lovers he had in the past, and she was also unable to find out whether or not he had broken up with all of them.

It was merely these sorts of things happening that made Lydia a little dispirited.

This stylish big-chested woman was referred to as Duchess Sayles, but Lydia did not know what kind of person she was.

Perhaps because she felt that she had asked too much, she burst out laughing when she saw that Lydia had a guarded expression, then suddenly wanted to introduce a young man whom she heard was a friend of the woman. It was said that the person who could predict the future exceptionally well was named Ladon.

He examined Lydia a little and said:

“Miss, if you feel puzzled whatsoever over your engagement, it’s better to reconsider.”

Because Edgar had heard this, it then developed into a serious matter.

Edgar said that Ladon was a swindler, and Ladon, who firmly refuted, announced that he was going to prove his abilities.

It seemed that in order to showcase his special ability, he had come to attend the party.

Recently, he had gradually developed a reputation in society.

Under everyone’s attention, Ladon entered into the other room alone, and asked Lydia, who remained in the hall, to write down a sentence after five minutes. It was said that he had already read the sentence in advance and remembered it.

In result, the answer was exact and people couldn't help but gasp in admiration, but Edgar immediately saw through his trick.

The nobles who knew they were cheated were all furious, thus the party was in an uproar.

Lydia realized that the cause of the uproar could have been herself, so her face tightened in annoyance, thinking that Edgar should have chosen a slightly more peaceful way to deal with it.

While leaving, Lydia caught a glimpse at Duchess Sayles glaring resentfully at Edgar, and that stare gloomily remained in her mind.

So when she went to see Edgar after keeping a distance for several days, and moreover knew the reason why she was suddenly being called over, she couldn't help but exclaim,

“Why would you plant something that's forbidden to plant?!”

Lydia found out that Raven had an accident, so after having her measurements taken and immediately rushing over, she had just reached the Earl's mansion.

“But if it's not planted, then it's unknown as to what will happen, isn't that so?”

He answered as if it was a matter of fact.

It clearly indicates “do not plant” because bad things will happen, what was this man thinking?

Although she was engaged to him, Lydia still found it difficult to understand him at times.

“Even if you don’t know, what does that have to do with it!”

“I don’t like

it this way. I want to know what the gift is, and so I kept it at hand.”

He shrugged, unconcerned. Lydia was standing with him in the courtyard.

“This has something to do with fairies, at least discuss it with me.”

Lydia said this, but it was her first time seeing this kind of phenomenon.

A massive bell-shaped dome with branches and leaves intertwining in a complex manner sat in the courtyard.

The closely interweaved branches and leaves didn’t even have small cracks, so the situation inside couldn’t be seen. Even if they wanted to cut off the branches and leaves, the saw was to no avail. It seemed that Raven was locked inside.

“But Lydia, not only were you very busy lately, you were also avoiding me, isn’t that so?”

Edgar suddenly leaned his face over and Lydia couldn’t help but pull away.

Look, he’s frowning in dissatisfaction and going back to his original attitude.

“If there’s anything that you’re displeased with then speak frankly, because being busy and gradually drifting apart will make people unhappy.”

Hearing him say this, Lydia also felt that way.

“No matter what I say, don’t you turn a deaf ear to it? I clearly told you not to be so intimate in public, but at that party before, while dancing you...”

He suddenly kissed Lydia’s neck.

“Many of my close friends were present at the time, and moreover, the atmosphere of the party was really expecting us to be able to interact as fiancé and fiancée. Isn't that okay?”

“Is that so? You humiliated me for the sake of the party atmosphere?”

“Say, Lydia, I actually think that having no interactions like strangers only because of being in public is very odd, which may bring about unnecessary misunderstandings.”

“You mean to say that your former lover will perhaps hope that you won’t get along with your fiancée?”

Edgar revealed a slightly surprised and troubled expression, sighing softly.

“That’s not what I meant. I am worried that someone may be interested in you and are hoping for that.”

And yet there isn’t such a person.

“Listen well Lydia, I only have you in my heart, please believe me.”

“I--I believe you, otherwise I wouldn't have gotten engaged with you.”

“But when that swindler wanted you to reconsider the marriage, didn't you hesitate?”

“....I didn't hesitate.”

“You did. After you saw that guy's simple trick, your face turned pale.”

She was indeed frightened, as she was worried about what she was going to do if that person could truly predict the future.

“Edgar, even if that was the case, you shouldn't have exposed him on the spot and made him a laughingstock.”

“Then what do you think I should have done?”

Their argument was meaningless. Lydia lowered her head; this isn't what she wanted.

“I'm sorry, I was overdoing it that time.”

Edgar said, giving in and reaching out to touch Lydia's face.

“I'll be careful from now on, is that okay?”

“....Yeah.”

What about Duchess Sayles?

In the end, Lydia couldn't question him further and nodded, but when his lips touched her cheek as if it was a sign of reconciliation, Lydia couldn't help but retreat.

“C--compared to this, Raven’s matter is more important, we must hurry and save him.”

Unwilling to withdraw his hand from her body, Edgar half-satirically whispered:

“If I was the one locked up, would you have hurried here too?”

“My lord, the rest of the fruit trees are here.”

Tompkins came in at the perfect timing. He’d probably been waiting for the chance to speak up, as he moved nimbly towards Edgar, which didn’t match with his round corpulent body, and handed him the small wooden box.

Lydia peered into the box. Although it was her first time seeing it, she thought that it shouldn’t be something bad.

“Mr. Tompkins, did you see what the fairy looked like?”

“No, the person to answer the door was Raven. When I came to the main entrance hall, they had already left, and the hall was still amassed with numerous leaves.”

Perhaps it was a reincarnated tree fairy.

“I wonder if it was a woodwose fairy...”

“Is it a dangerous fairy?”

“No, they shouldn’t be. It’s an ancient race, and although they rarely come in contact with humans, it isn’t surprising if they’re close with the Earl house’s ancestors. These fairies are very faithful in their friendship, so I think Raven should be okay inside.”

Edgar looked up at the dome made of branches and leaves.

“However, it has been more than three hours since it turned out like this. He can’t live in there for the rest of his life.”

Yes, but if that fairy is a woodwose, then taking the initiative to contact them is very difficult.

As Lydia contemplated on this, the intertwining branches and leaves suddenly emitted a rumbling sound.

Then, the leaves fell down.

The leaves scattered and finally dropped completely in one breath. It formed what looked to be an avalanche of leaves and was rushing towards the three of them standing in the courtyard.

Lydia was almost swept away by the leaves when Edgar grabbed ahold of her hand.

Tompkins wasn’t standing firmly and fell to the ground on his buttocks, and as a result it seemed that the leaves pouring out from the dome buried him.

After the leaves had finally stopped rushing out, the tightly intertwined branches from before had very quickly withered, then completely vanished.

Bewildered, Lydia turned around and saw Raven standing motionless, clasping

a flower pot. He was standing in the center of where the dome made of branches and leaves should have been.

*

The seed brought by the fairy sprouted and grew immediately as soon as it came across soil, growing into a large dome that had shut Raven inside.

Nevertheless, that was the only thing that happened and for awhile before the branches naturally withered, Raven felt that he was inside a cozy forest.

In the end, despite knowing what happened after it was used, it was still unknown in what it was intended for.

For Raven, only completing the daily tasks dutifully was his duty, so he returned to his original activities once again and soon forgot about the matter with the seed.

But before long, Raven's body was beginning to act strangely.

When he poured tea as usual, the hand holding the teapot moved by itself. To say the least, he felt as such, and so he immediately turned his body to the other side.

Although the tea he had thrown about had spilled all over the floor of the morning room, fortunately it had missed spilling on the lord's head.

Despite Raven breathing a sigh of relief, he stood there blankly, as he was

confused.

“What happened? It’s quite rare that your hand slipped.”

Edgar’s voice made him return to his senses.

“My deepest apologies, were you burnt in any way?”

“It’s nothing, only a bit of water splashed on me.”

When Raven bent down and tried to wipe the droplets off his lord’s coat, his hand appeared to move by itself again.

His tightly clenched fist almost swung towards him and so he squatted down immediately.

“Raven, are you unwell?”

“No... I’m fine.”

As long as he left Edgar’s side, the strange power concentrated within his hand would be gone. Even then, Raven still pressed his hand cautiously while lowering his head.

“I will brew new tea.”

“No, you don’t have to. I will stay in the study, so if Lydia comes, let me know.”

Raven stiffly watched Edgar leave and after waiting for his lord to leave the room, he silently wiped off cold sweat.

He unfolded his right hand and found nothing unusual, but the actions just now clearly had nothing to do with his will.

Previously, Raven often lost himself during battle and brought about severe casualties, but he was in a state unable to think at the time, so if he tried stopping himself composedly, he should be able to control his own body.

What on earth was going on?

“Raven, if your work is completed then you can rest.”

Before Tomkins called out, who was passing through the living room, he had been thinking about this.

The resting place of the Earl house’s high-ranking attendants was a small room, which was connected to the head butler’s private room. Unlike the other waiters, they even had their meals here.

When Raven entered the room with Tompkins, and housekeeper just happened to bring tea.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Lane, I spilt tea onto the floor of the morning room, could I ask you to send a maid there later?”

“Oh my, was it the lord having some strange suggestion and wanted you to try it out?”

“No, it’s was my own mistake.”

“Oh dear, that’s not like you.”

“If tea stains remain on the wallpaper, perhaps that would look very unpleasant.”

Seeing Raven appearing panic-stricken, the tall housekeeper burst out laughing.

“It’s just tea stains, once I recalled you getting blood in the parlor before, this isn’t anything at all.”

Has this sort of thing happened before?

But to turn his surroundings into a sea of blood in order to protect his lord, it was difficult for Raven to consider it as a disrespectful action. He cared more about the tea stains.

“Well, sit down, I don’t know if we still have biscuits.”

Tomkins rummaged through the cupboard, then placed the cookies and spare honey onto the table.

The moment after having finished the morning shift, resting a little and drinking tea. Was this called peace? This notion swept past Raven’s mind.

His master often said to him that if the enemies chase them disappeared, and a daily peaceful life approached, then he could go and pursue his own happiness.

Raven didn’t know what that happiness was, perhaps originally, his upbringing and destiny were too cruel, but he had no choice but to bear it completely.

He only knew that if Edgar was happy, then he would also be happy. Therefore, compared to the past, the present was much better now.

“That’s right, Mrs. Lane, we need to hire a personal maid.”

The butler said.

“Yes, regarding the Lady’s maid, the woman must be able to meet the requirements.”

“Raven, what kind of lady do you think is suitable?”

Raven wished that Edgar could find happiness in future, for this to happen, he sincerely hoped that Edgar, who had just gotten engaged, could live in peace with Lydia.

“As long as it is a woman who won’t tempt Lord Edgar for the time being, then....”

Although he offered the suggestion seriously, the butler and housekeeper burst out laughing.

The bell on the wall of the room rang; the bells on the wall were connected to the mansion’s main room, and the only person to call the attendant at present would be Edgar.

Raven confirmed that the bell ringing was from the study, then stood up.

After entering the study, he saw Edgar opening the drawers of the table and seemed to be looking for something.

“Oh, Raven, do you know where the letter opener is?”

Edgar walked away from the table; even the decorative cupboard was opened.

“A few days ago, you threw the letter opener out the window.”

“What? Is that so?”

“You said that if you looked for Miss Lydia during her working shift to chat, she would be upset, so you went to her study with the premise of borrowing the letter opener and stayed there for thirty-five minutes.”

“.....I remember. If that’s the case, then prepare a new letter opener.”

“I will go and buy one.”

“I’ll leave it to you.”

Since there was no letter opener nor any alternative, after Edgar turned away from Raven, he planned to tear open the letter with his hand.

“Would you like to use this?”

Raven couldn’t

just stand there and let that happen, so he took out the knife from his inner coat pocket that he usually carried with him.

At that moment, a strange feeling ran through his right hand again.

The hand holding the knife almost stabbed Edgar.

Raven moved his left hand, trying to stop himself.

“.....Ngh.....”

By the time Edgar turned around and heard him groan in pain, the knife had been stabbed in Raven’s left wrist.

“Raven, what are you doing!”

Astonished, Edgar came near, but Raven stepped back.

“No, please do not come any closer.”

But Edgar didn’t mind it in the least and grabbed ahold of Raven’s hand, pulled out the knife and threw it away.

Blood was dripping out. Edgar tied a handkerchief around his hand to stop the bleeding and as a result, even his own clothes were stained with blood.

However, Raven’s right hand still carried that strange power. He didn’t know what he was going to do Edgar, who was standing in front of him.

Thinking this, Raven quickly withdrew his hand from Edgar in fear.

“What on earth is going on?”

“....I don’t know....but please do not come close to me.”

“Raven, you’re acting very strange.”

“Please allow me to take a break for the time being.”

Then, Raven fled from the study.

Raven who was covered in blood, ran to the dressmaker studio and the maids

inside had all run away.

He nonchalantly prepared the needle and thread and began stitching his own wound. He was already quite used to suppressing the pain, and a wound to this degree was practically nothing.

As he was silently carrying on, a person stood by the door.

“I heard that you were injured.”

It was Lydia, Raven tried to stand up.

“Ah, it’s alright, it’s better if you sit.”

Even if she said that, there was no way that he could act discourteously towards his lord’s fiancée.

“This is the servants’ workroom, I’ll send someone over if you need something, please wait in the reception room for a little bit.”

“I came to see you. Edgar is very worried about you. However, he said he can't seem to get close to you.”

A grey cat by Lydia’s feet jumped onto the table. This was Lydia’s working partner ---the fairy cat Nico.

“Hey Raven, your needlework is really strange.”

He gazed at Raven’s wrist, which had a needle stuck in it.

Lydia followed Nico’s gaze and looked over, then widened her eyes in surprise and almost fainted.

Raven quickly caught Lydia with his uninjured arm and managed to hold her up. She sat on the chair, then took a deep breath.

“I’m sorry…… But, um…… stitching it yourself, wouldn’t it hurt?”

Lydia wanted to look away, but she looked over because she cared too much and as a result, she looked away again.

“A little.”

“I--I see.”

“Well, sit down and let’s talk.”

Nico, who was sitting by the table, urged Raven to and he finally did so. If he didn’t do this, the stitches in his hand and the exposed wound would visibly enter Lydia’s sight.

He bit off the thread, and after rolling down his sleeve, he was able to conceal the ugly wound, but on the contrary, it was his blood-stained shirt that became very ugly. But either way, Lydia would not look below Raven’s neck.

“Hey, why did it turn out like this? Could it be related to the fairy’s seed from before?”

Raven realized that just then. Having said that, his right hand started to feel strange after that.

“I am not too sure, but my hand would often move against my will, I thought it was merely my imagination at first.”

“Your hand moving by itself? When does that happen?”

This was already quite clear.

“When Lord Edgar is beside me, I will hurt him.”

“Ohh was there a fairy trying to harass the Earl whom it doesn’t like, by giving a pretend congratulatory gift?”

“But Nico, I don't think the woodwose fairy would do something like that.”

“Hmm, well that is true.”

“Can I take a look at your hand?”

Lydia gently raised Raven’s hand that unwillingly moved and was uninjured.

“Please finish looking within a minute.”

“Eh? Why?”

“If Miss Lydia I have touched for more than a minute, I must report it to Lord Edgar.”

“Did Edgar say that?”

Lydia frowned. When she did this, it meant something had offended her. But Raven merely knew up to there, so he could only tell the truth.

“Yes. Lord Edgar said that trivial matters do not need to be minded, but I cannot discern what a trivial matter is.”

“..... Even so, a minute is too short! Truly an incorrigible man! Listen well Raven, this is like a doctor consultation, I’m investigating clues in order to find the cause of this, you don’t have to report everything to Edgar!”

Just as Lydia deliberately wasn't going to let go and investigated it, he began to carefully check the time, and when the clock's minute hand clicked, Raven confirmed that a minute had passed, thinking that this must be reported to his lord, thus he took note.

"Hey, have you had these kind of injury marks* on your hand before?"

His right wrist had traces of black ink droplet-like stains.

"I believe I never had. Miss Lydia, what does this have to do with fairies?"

"I'm sorry, I don't know. But don't worry, I'll do something about it."

"Ehh, don't make promises easily, you have this bad habit."

Hearing Nico say that, Lydia's smile froze; it seems that she had no solution.

Raven thought to himself that he firstly mustn't expect too much.

Lydia released Raven's hand, however she also appeared to have similar injury marks on her wrist that no one seemed to have discovered that time.

*

"How is Raven's situation?"

In the moving barouche, Edgar asked Lydia.

The two of them were currently going to Hyde Park for a walk. It was said to be taking a walk, but for Lydia, this was one of the social activities that she was bound to by obligation.

The sunshine peeked through the clouds. Lydia held a parasol sewn with artificial flowers, and appeared to be a considerably sincere and proper young lady on the verge of getting married. Edgar wanted to make Lydia, who was dressed for the occasion, well known as much as possible, and integrate his fiancée, who was not of noble birth, into society.

Although some of the details were exhausting, Lydia tried hard to keep up with Edgar.

But compared to social life, she was more worried about Raven.

“Surely enough, something’s happened to him, right?”

He said that he hoped you relieve him of his attendant duties for the time being before things are settled.”

“Yes, it was my fault that I let Raven plant that seed.”

Edgar lowered his eyes in dismay.

The shadow of his top hat fell among his long eyelashes, making him appear lonely.

“Edgar, it’ll be alright, you’ve struggled through more awful matters with him.... besides, I can help you now.”

He raised his gaze, his strong and forceful ash-mauve eyes catching Lydia’s figure.

His golden bangs fluttered and were being blown irregularly by the wind, he casually leaned forward and gripped Lydia's hand.

"Lydia, I'm glad that you are with me."

With sorrowful eyes and sincere words, it immediately stirred Lydia's heart.

It wasn't known if Edgar knew about that, as he used his fingers to push back Lydia's wind-blown hair behind her ear.

"Let's not go to the park."

"What?"

"If possible, let's go to a place where there's no one, I want to spend time together alone."

Because she wasn't sure if he was joking or being serious, she would panic.

Ever since they got engaged, Edgar's restraint would disappear when it came to seducing Lydia and it had come to the point where he would even go as far as to speak of suggestive matters.

Even if only his words were tolerable; Lydia had always felt that his behaviour was beginning to escalate.

But for Lydia, things like merely talking to him like a lover or gazing into each other's eyes was already using her greatest effort.

"N--no, Edgar."

"You speak in a very cute voice, it doesn't sound like a refusal at all."

Edgar revealed a naughty smile to Lydia, who was blushing. At that moment, Lydia's hand was pulled with force, which resulted in her body having been thrust forward, and then his upright face leaned close.

Lydia suddenly pushed Edgar away.

Since the engagement, she was careful with not blatantly refusing, and it wasn't an action that she disliked, yet her hand seemed to move on its own.

Just as Lydia was astonished, Edgar sat back down in surprise as well.

"Are you angry?"

"N--No... I'm not."

Her disordered mind couldn't calm down and the carriage proceeded towards the surrounding roads of Hyde Park, finally stopping.

"Let's get off."

After Edgar picked up the cane that had fallen by his feet, he pulled Lydia's hand up, and in result, Lydia suddenly slapped his hand away.

"Lydia?"

Lydia was also confused and didn't know what to do.

"We've already reconciled beforehand. Are you still dissatisfied with me?"

This time, Edgar was truly unhappy.

"Um, it's not like that."

"Perhaps it's best for you to go home for today."

Edgar said, as he dismounted from the carriage, leaving Lydia behind and closing the door.

“You may want to be alone, so I’m going to find a street carriage.”

“Wait!”

It can’t go on like this

. Lydia quickly tried to get off the carriage and because it was difficult to move in a dress with many decorations, she lost her footing.

“That’s dangerous.”

Although she did not fall thanks to Edgar, Lydia’s hand moved by itself again.

By the time Lydia realized, she had already lifted her hand and swung it towards Edgar.

Edgar was almost hit as he caught Lydia’s hand to stop her, and looked down to see the mood expressed through her eyes. Instead of saying that it was anger, it was rather forlorn.

“....Me touching you makes you that unhappy?”

Despite there being pain from the strong hold on her hand, Lydia quickly shook her head.

“No, I didn’t want to do that! It’s my hand...”

“Are the both of you having a lover’s quarrel?”

A female voice could be heard from the side, making Lydia swallow back the words she wanted to say. Wearing a beautiful hat was Duchess Sayles, who bore a smile and was standing to the side.

“Earl Ashenbert, aren’t you very familiar with how to treat women? To make an innocent young lady angry, this isn’t like you.”

“Please don’t worry about it, the more we quarrel the more our feelings grow.”

As long as Edgar faced women, he would smile regardless of who they were, but his tone just now felt sarcastic. Did he and Duchess Sayles harbour feelings of animosity?

Thinking about this, Lydia became confused.

“Miss Carlton, if you are hesitant... that’s right, if you wish for him to disappear before your eyes, I can lend you a hand.”

Her hand casually took Edgar’s; did she want to take him away?

If she could say ‘please stop this’, then it was fine.

However, if she didn’t firmly say that as a fiancée herself, especially at this sort of time, then it would be mistakenly interpreted by others that she may not want to get married.

Lydia was clearly fond of Edgar more than anyone else but was unable to properly express her feelings with her behaviour and words.

Right now, wanting to convey those feelings was more difficult. Because if she approached Edgar, her hand would certainly hit him again; this would definitely make Duchess Sayles misunderstand, and even Edgar will get angry.

“No, I will leave.”

Lydia said, then turned around and broke into a run. As she ran, she finally figured out the cause of this incident.

Am I not like Raven?

She gasped for breath as she stopped by a large tree, then quickly took off her gloves to examine her wrist. Lydia’s wrist had black ink droplet-like injury marks just like Raven.

“Wh--what am I going to do...”

There’s no way I can get close to Edgar anymore...

“Lydia.”

Edgar appeared to have chased after her, as his voice reached her ears. Lydia was shocked and moved to the back of the tree.

“No, don’t come close to me.”

“Why are you like this? I really don’t understand.”

“I’m the same as Raven, my hand will move on its own!”

“.....Really? Is it contagious?”

“Didn’t I say to not come close!”

Lydia was afraid; she felt that if she was careless, perhaps an irreparable rift will form between them, so she firmly said this to Edgar, who wanted to come closer. At that moment, a strong wind blew.

The sound of the leaves around them was unusual. Just as she was thinking

that, without knowing when, a dark figure had emerged, standing there.

“You used it, did you not?”

The person said.

“It seems like I was a step too late.”

“...Who is it?”

The brim of his hat was quite low and he used a branch as a walking stick, but the two of them couldn't remember any other features of this man. It was clearly a bright day, but it felt like they were in a dark place overlooking the other man, this made Lydia think that he wasn't human.

“Are you a woodwose fairy?”

As soon as his body moved, the sound of giant tree leaves rustling against each other rang.

“The two of you are the Blue Knight Earl and his Countess, correct? I was very disrespectful a few days ago, I accidentally sent you a defective gift.”

“Defective... so that's why it can't be planted.”

“Since you have already used it, it can't be helped, please allow me to deliver you the real gift.”

The fairy handed a new box to Edgar.

“Wait a minute, why is the seed from before defective? It was all because of that seed that the Earl family's attendant and I have been trying to hurt Edgar.”

Lydia hastily asked the fairy to stay.

“Ohhh, if that's the case, the malevolent powers residing in our trees' fruits

are directed against the Earl.”

“The tree fruits are malevolent...”

“This is a fruit that grows on special trees, and it happens that someone buried something malevolent under the tree roots. Humans seem to have a spell where they curse each other using pieces of paper written with resentment and bury it within the roots of the giant tree. It originally ought to be merely a consolation, but because of the magic of the fruit trees, a will of the malevolence was created.”

“You mean to say that someone hates me, so they casted this sort of spell?”

“I’m afraid that’s right. The malice residing within the fruits deceived us, and perhaps it had been delivered here by mistake.

The two of you must be careful, it’s contagious if you touch someone infected with the malevolence.”

Lydia exchanged a glance with Edgar.

“Is there no way to eliminate the malevolence?”

The dark figure who seemed to be thinking shook his head, and the sound of rustling leaves came again.

“If the paper with the spell is returned to the caster, and the caster no longer approaches the person that they hate, the malevolent power may disappear. If the paper is torn, then the spell’s power will attack the caster. This is what is referred to as a rebound, when someone harms others, they harm themselves as well.”

The wind blew. The silhouette of the fairy swayed.

“My deepest apologies, but I must go. Earl, I hope you remain the best of health from now on.”

“Woodrose, where is the tree with the papers of that spell?”

She was missing her chance to ask for that crucial information. Lydia hurriedly asked the disappearing silhouette.

“...On the outskirts by the riverside, near the tree by the side of the red tower...”

When only those words were somehow managed to be caught, the fairy’s figure disappeared.

In the end, they decided to cancel their walk around the park and Lydia returned home. He tried not to touch Lydia while in the carriage, but he arrived at the Carlton residence and got off together with her.

“Can I drop by and visit?”

Although it was a usual thing, Edgar had been quiet and looked like he had been contemplating about something since then in the carriage. She thought that he would’ve left for home already.

Even if he approached Lydia and got close to her, he would only feel apprehensive because he wouldn’t know what her “malevolent” possessed hand would do.

However, it seemed that Edgar naturally gave his hat and walking stick to the care of the housekeeper who came and entered the parlor.

“Edgar, who would curse you? Do you happen to know something?”

He was standing by the window and maintaining her distance from him, while Lydia sat on the sofa. After thinking a little, he answered:

“I didn’t do anything to make others resent me.”

Of course he’s done something.

“We need to find the red tower by the riverside. If we can find what’s buried under the roots of the fairy tree, Raven and I should go back to normal.”

“That’s right, leave that matter to me.”

It seemed that he did not want Lydia to be involved.

“...You know about the red tower?”

“Oh well, it’s easy to know of that landmark, so I just think it’ll be easy to find it.”

Is that true?

The housekeeper entered the salon and placed tea on the table. She blankly watched the housekeeper leave the room but by the time Lydia suddenly noticed, Edgar was before her.

“Edgar, it’s not good to be close to me.”

“I know. But can I ask you something?”

Lydia endured the the will of her hand with the cursed injury mark.

“Slapping and pushing me away are actions that aren’t of your own will and due to the curse, correct?”

“Th--that’s right. None of them are of my own will.”

“It’s not like you don’t want me to touch you, right?”

He quickly sat down beside her and leaned forward towards Lydia.

“...Yes.”

“Thank goodness”, he said, expressing a smile on his face.

“Even when I’m by your side, it’s painful not being able to hug you. Don’t you think so too?”

While Lydia was startled, she looked into his eyes. His eyes were unusually serious.

Indeed, it's not like she didn't care if things were as it is.

Walking close to each other, and not even being able dance with each other. If they couldn't even hold hands, they wouldn't be able to hold the wedding.

However, the matter that Edgar was thinking of was quite different from small inconveniences, Lydia thought. He was always much more impatient.

“Even now, with your behaviour being the opposite, your true feelings are that you yearn for me, isn’t that so?”

“Eh... that is...”

Edgar didn’t mind as Lydia tried to push him back, who was getting awfully close to her. Instead, he put his arm around her and murmured into her ear.

“If that’s the case, I’ve made my decision. Listen Lydia, I will not falter at such a trivial matter.”

Before she knew it, Lydia grabbed onto the vase. She felt the chill as her hands raised it up by themselves, but Edgar managed to grab on her wrist and stop it with a composed expression.

Although she knew he was cautiously putting strength into his grip, Lydia felt as if her wrist was going to break. It hurt so much that it started to numb and she let go of the vase.

Even so, he did not loosen his grip as he moved forward and grabbed onto her hand. He pinned her down on the sofa until she was unable to move about.

“I’m sorry, but I’m already at my limit.”

“Edgar.. sto--”

“I would not do such a thing normally. It’s just for now, so don’t be afraid.”

Lydia was confused by the pain on her wrist and also the feeling of her body being glued down. Not only with her right hand that was possessed with malevolence, but also with her other hand desperately trying to push him away.

“Look at me.”

On contrary to the Edgar that was trying to use force to hold her down, his eyes were gentle, soothingly staring into her like a different person. Persistently and gently, he stroked her hair.

“I will do nothing but stay like this.”

Drawing back his arm around her back, he tried to wrap her around with his whole body. Her heart was strikingly fast as usual, but Lydia gradually calmed down little by little. She laid her cheek on his shoulder and took a deep breath. She felt relieved by his faint smell of hair gel, knowing that her favourite person was right beside her.

Lydia may have also thought about wanting to be in contact and touched.

At that moment, she felt the tension of power from her cursed hand being released.

Edgar relaxed his strength as he felt her resistance diminish. He gently held her hand up and muttered,

“Your mark, it’s gone.”

Lydia also shifted her glance. The mark that looked like an ink stain was gone. Her hand that lost all her strength accepted Edgar’s fingers that entwined with it.

Perhaps this meant that the contagious malevolence was gone now. Although it was malice directed at Edgar, it may not been able to keep its power within Lydia while she was being hugged.

As she faintly relaxed back absentmindedly, Edgar licked the side of her ear.

Caught off-guard, she gave out a short scream.

“Wh-- What are you doing!?”

“Can I take back what I said earlier?”

“Eh?”

“I don’t think I could stay back not doing anything to you.”

Instantly, her right hand raised up upon her own will.

*

For Raven, taking the initiative to leave his master was simply impossible. But now he needed to do so.

He left the mansion and then wearily and aimlessly walked along the street. At that moment, Nico stopped him.

“Yo Raven, where are you going?”

He was unable to answer and walked past Nico, who was resting on top of a tree by the road.

Thus, Nico jumped down from the tree and stood in front of Raven. He stood on his hind legs, had his arms crossed over his chest, and looked up at Raven doubtfully.

“Holding that kind of thing, it’s best that you don’t anywhere with a lot of people.”

Raven held a hatchet that was stained with chicken blood.

“Is that so?”

“What are you going to do with that?”

“If by any chance I do something, I plan to chop my hand off.”

Nico shivered as the fur all over his body stood on end, but he took a deep breath and calmly began to speak with a stiffened expression.

“Well, I suppose that you’ll act quickly. Umm, anyhow, let’s calm down,” Nico said.

He walked up to the roadside hedge and sat on the edge of a stone wall.

After motioning Raven, he eventually followed along.

“You don’t have to fret so much.”

As he said that, he patted Raven’s shoulder. Although up until now, Raven still didn't completely understand how to interact with others, but he openly received Nico’s friendly attitude. Luckily, Nico spoke with him, he thought.

Nevertheless he sat reservedly as before, and firmly held onto the hatchet on his lap.

“However, I almost hit Lord Edgar in the end.”

“Oh? And what happened with the Earl?”

“Lord Edgar dodged it well and so I’ve made a hole in the wall.”

Nico worriedly glanced at Raven's clenched fists and it seemed that he had hit the wall with a lot of force.

"....I see. It's a relief he can dodge, otherwise Lydia would have lost her fiancé."

Raven broke out in a cold sweat, as a one-hit kill was not rare for him.

"Why did he get close to you? It's dangerous, so shouldn't he try to stay away from you?"

"It was because the ink stain that infected Miss Lydia seemed to have disappeared, so Lord Edgar wanted to try the same method."

"The same method? What did he do to Lydia?"

"Lord Edgar seemed to be unable to restrain himself yesterday so he hugged Miss Lydia tightly with all his strength."

Nico looked at Raven with both surprise and pity.

"I see. You and Lydia are different, as your wrist power and reflexes are quite good. You wouldn't be subdued that easily."

People who walked along the street would certainly pick up the pace before Raven, who seemed to be muttering away to himself while sitting alongside a cat and holding a hatchet.

Indifferent about that sort of thing, Raven gripped onto the hatchet tightly.

“It seems that I have no other choice but to chop off my right hand.”

“Y--you should wait, you mustn't do that extreme sort of thing, there may be other ways, ahh that's right, Lydia said that she would think of a way.”

“Yes, Miss Lydia made a rash promise.”

Raven let out a sarcastic remark unconsciously, and Nico looked up at him, scratched his head and said:

“Oh dear, although the one who said that was me, Lydia will try her best to help you even if it was a rash promise.”

The fairy cat Nico stood up and swung his tail, motioning Raven to follow him, thus Raven stood up.

Raven followed Nico to the Carlton house. His head was solemnly lowered, and despite Lydia urging him to drink tea, he was motionless with a meek expression.

After Lydia got hold of the situation from a moment ago, she felt sorry for him and thought that she must hurry up and help him somehow.

Although Edgar said that he would try to find the red tower, it seems that he wasn't able to properly explain it to him. But It was also possible that he couldn't explain in time as Raven had just suddenly rushed out of the Earl's mansion.

“At any rate, Raven you shouldn't worry about it too much, there's still hope in this matter.”

“Yes, Miss Lydia’s rash promise is my only hope.”

He looked directly at Lydia, with no other meaning expressed through his eyes whatsoever. Although Lydia knew this, she smiled and became very embarrassed.

The teacup in Nico’s hands was shaking; he must have been resisting the urge to laugh.

“Like I said Raven, I already found a way.”

Lydia pulled herself together and said:

“I know of the cause of this now. That’s why all that’s left to do is to undo the spell. On the outskirts of the mansion, there is a woodwose fairy planted at the red tower, so if we find the object buried within the roots...”

“Red tower? Is it that castle?”

“You know about it? That’s right, Edgar seemed to have known as well.”

“If I remember correctly, that it is Duchess Sayles’ mansion. She bought that ancient castle several years ago, and Lord Edgar was once invited as well.”

In other words, that was Duchess Sayles’ house. Yet, why did Edgar tell Lydia that he didn’t know of it?

Moreover, if the cursed paper written with a grudge against Edgar was buried in her mansion, wouldn’t the one who hates Edgar be Duchess Sayles?

There really is something between her and Edgar.....

Lydia took a deep breath to calm her unsettled heart.

How could she be worried because of this?

Edgar made the “malevolence” attached to Lydia disappear. He should only have Lydia in his mind now. She must also save Raven for Edgar’s sake.

“What is Edgar doing right now?”

“Currently, he is at a nobles’ gathering.”

In that case, he shouldn’t have time to investigate the fairy tree.

“Raven, let’s go. To Duchess Sayles’ mansion.”

*

Duchess Sayles’ castle courtyard was open to the public, and regardless of who, they could enter.

Nobles arranging for private land to be used as parks for the nearby residents was not unusual. With this, Raven followed Lydia and Nico into the garden pathways and headed towards the red tower, which could be seen clearly even from a distance.

This time, Raven was not here under Edgar’s orders nor for work, rather, he decided to do this, which was inconceivable to him. If it was him from before, he would think that he must wait for Edgar’s instructions if there was a way to undo the spell, but this time, why did he decide to follow Lydia’s suggestion? He really didn’t understand.

Both Lydia and Nico were doing this for Raven, and these kind intentions had

also moved his heart. Raven was still unable to comprehend his own heart, so he hadn't noticed this; he merely looked at the two people walking not too far ahead of him.

For Raven, to go as far as to have people that he must to serve and protect, apart from Edgar, was something unimaginable. But nowadays, he was naturally come into terms with this.

If the person to become the Countess was not Lydia, perhaps Raven wouldn't have this kind of feeling. He would have merely deemed them as Edgar's possessions.

"Raven, it must be that tree."

Lydia turned with a cheerful smile on her face, Raven narrowed his eyes at her.

The tree Lydia pointed at was a tall tree whose height could rival the red tower.

That tree was probably more ancient than the castle, and the range of where the roots grew was huge, but they could only search everywhere carefully.

Raven was about to immediately take action, but then he heard Lydia whisper "ah" and then turned around.

He saw a woman standing at the other side of the shrubbery.

"Duchess Sayles..."

Lydia muttered.

Lydia waited there as she watched Duchess Sayles slowly approach gracefully, and told herself that it wasn't necessary to escape or be afraid.

"What a coincidence, Miss Carlton, to unexpectedly meet you here."

Even though she revealed a smile, Lydia still felt very oppressed by an intense feeling. Her back straightened, thinking that she didn't want to be outdone.

"Have you come to visit the garden? Or..."

"Duchess Sayles, I have something to request of you."

Lydia had decided to say directly.

"Oh my, what is it?"

"Please don't hate Edgar."

The Duchess showed a slightly surprised expression.

"Me hating Earl Ashenbert? Why do you think that?"

"I absolutely.... don't know what Edgar has done to you, so I can only come to request this of you."

Despite Lydia having to look up while confronting Duchess Sayles, who had a tall stature, she still displayed a strong willed gaze.

After the Duchess contemplated for a bit, she laughed, as if she thought that it was amusing.

"Is he that important to you? But he is a man to be hated. Let me tell you how

terrible of a man he is.”

“...I know.”

At this point in time, no matter what Edgar did, she wouldn't be surprised. Despite that, she still liked him.

“I know better than anyone what kind of man he is! More importantly.... please tell me where you buried the paper with the curse.”

Lydia, desperately spoke in order to not lose to the Duchess. Even with a face of surprise, the Duchess still replied frankly.

“If that's the case, what will you give me?”

“What?”

“If I fulfil your request, then are you willing to do as I say?”

Duchess Sayles leaned over and reached towards Lydia's cheek with both hands. Being gazed at so closely by the Duchess, Lydia panicked.

“I didn't expect you to have such a stubborn personality, I feel that you become more and more cute.”

While Lydia was confused, the Duchess hugged her. Baffled, Lydia looked towards Raven but he was also at a loss and merely looked in Lydia's direction. If the person was male, it was a different matter, but he didn't think that the lady before him would harm Lydia.

“Umm... Duchess Sayles?”

“Miss Carlton. How about we get to know each other more?”

The Duchess lightly stroked Lydia's hair. The scent of perfume on her body made her feel dizzy.

"Duchess Sayles, do you really want to infuriate me?"

A familiar voice interrupted the two of them. After Duchess Sayles released her arm, Lydia quickly left her side, and Edgar came over, holding her around the shoulders.

"Oh my, Earl Ashenbert you shouldn't be mad at me, she came to request something of me."

"You don't know what the cursed paper is, and yet still negotiated with her, it's not fair at all to strike up a deal."

Astonished, Lydia saw the side of Edgar's face. With a solemn face, he firmly said to the Duchess:

"Please hand Ladon over, you're hiding him here, isn't that right?"

Ladon? Could it be that young man?

The Duchess glanced at the puzzled Lydia, then sighed and said:

"Earl, because you've exposed him, he was unable to enter society afterwards. Even I, who introduced him to society as a fortune teller, was also humiliated."

“He’s just a clever little magician, you should have known that as well.”

“If he can make me happy, I don't mind pretending to be fooled.”

“You're right, providing entertainment for aristocrats to pass the time is Ladon’s job, but the man did not recognize his own position.”

Edgar said very coldly.

His ash-mauve eyes were different than usual, as it seemed to have an ice-blue tint. Lydia knew that no one could stand against Edgar this time.

Despite Duchess Sayles’ lips maintaining a smile, she seemed to admit defeat as she looked away from Edgar.

“I understand, I will bring Ladon here.”

At that moment, the thicket from behind rustled.

Lydia screamed.

Ladon had jumped out from the thickets and quickly pulled Lydia over.

“Ladon, don’t do anything stupid!”

Although Duchess Sayles said that, Ladon still held a knife against Lydia.

“Earl, were you looking for me?”

“I just wanted to tell you to not harbor grudges anymore.”

“.....You say it so simply. You were playing with me all along previously, and furthermore, you used dirty methods to win a large sum of money from me in the club gamble.” That resentment of yours is completely unjustified. Luckily I didn’t expose your trick because I was kind-hearted.”

“Kind-hearted? Not only did you threaten to expose my ways and make me deliberately lose money, you even forced me to borrow money to repay the gamblers, isn’t that so?!”

“That’s the so-called gambling.”

Edgar was mindful of Lydia as he tried to slowly approach.

Ladon noticed this and the knife originally intended for Lydia was now directed at Edgar.

“Stop, don’t come any closer.”

Raven did not miss out on this opportunity.

Raven ran and intervened between Ladon and Lydia, then knocked down Ladon’s hand that held the knife and tried to hit him.

If this was his usual self, he should have beaten Ladon in an instant.

However, Raven’s hand suddenly lost power and barely avoided Ladon’s knife.

Unfortunately, Edgar was also close by. Raven stopped for Edgar just in time, who moved in order to subdue Ladon.

Raven froze in fear, in his vision, Ladon was preparing to swing the knife at Edgar, whose back was against a large tree.

“Edgar!”

Lydia rushed over. Just when she was about to throw herself on Ladon from behind, Edgar suddenly grabbed Ladon's hands.

Although Lydia was thrown to the ground, the knife that swept past Edgar's side pierced his frockcoat, and was thrust deep into the tree trunk.

Edgar was unable to move, Ladon grabbed Edgar by the lapels and said:

"Earl, you've already been abandoned by luck because I have a spell against you."

"With your deceitful magic?"

Edgar said coldly.

"No, it's a real method that I've requested from a great magician. If you value your life, beg me to forgive you."

Despite the magician certainly being a swindler, the problem now did not lie here.

Raven stiffened and looked at his hands. If he approached Edgar, then he would involuntarily put Edgar in danger, and because that magic was Ladon's malevolence, Raven couldn't harm him.

What should I do?

Lydia was very anxious, and just when she propped herself up by holding onto the tree roots, her hand touched something.

It was a piece of paper. The paper was stuffed underneath the growing roots. The huge tree shook, and the leaves emitted a sound like a low mumble.

Was the fairy tree letting her know?

Lydia quickly seized the paper, then stood up shouted:

“Mr. Ladon, you are mistaken, the curse’s incantation already lost its effect.”

She unfolded the paper and raised it up for all to see; it had Edgar’s name, Ladon’s signature, as well as a drop of blood on the paper, which resembled the ink mark from before.

“Leave Edgar’s side, otherwise I will tear this up.”

Ladon looked surprised. The magician he consulted with probably didn’t tell him that if the paper with the spell was to be torn, it would be dangerous.

“If the spell is broken, the magic will harm you, so please do as I say. As long as you take the paper and never come close to Edgar, the magic will slowly disappear. Please leave here now.”

He turned to Lydia and laughed.

“Earl, this is truly fascinating, it seems that your fiancée and I are alike.”

“No, she is a genuine fairy doctor.”

The moment he said that, Edgar used his knee to strike him below the ribs.

Ladon staggered. Edgar pulled out the knife from his coat and quickly distanced himself.

“Raven, Lydia, get away quickly!”

Raven, reflexively followed Edgar’s order and grabbed Lydia’s hand while Edgar threw something. It was the fruit of the fairy tree.

When the fruit fell at Ladon’s feet, it began to grow rapidly. The branches curved and intertwined, suddenly forming an inverted bell shape.

In this way, the branches continued to shut Ladon in as it grew. It had quietened down not too long after, as the fairy seed probably stopped growing.

“Well then.”

After catching his breath, Edgar turned and smiled at Lydia.

“You really are too reckless...”

Then he gently embraced Lydia. He released his arms just before Lydia wanted to get away from the hug due to being shy, and without knowing when, he suddenly pulled out the paper with the curse from Lydia’s hands.

Just as she thought that, he immediately ripped up the paper and threw it away.

At that moment, a miserable sound came from within the dome of branches.

“This was originally a careless spell. Although it should be no great magic, I wanted to make him have a taste of my unpleasant suffering.”

This man was practically a demon.

Lydia frowned at Edgar who smiled and said, “it’s over”, then turned to Raven

and gently held his shoulder.

“With this, the magic will disappear. ”

“Yes, it seems that way.”

That ink stain-like imprint disappeared and Raven stroked his hand.

Edgar happily ruffled Raven’s hair.

Perplexed, Duchess Sayles looked up at the semicircular object.

“Anyhow, what kind of contraption is this?”

“It's a secret. More importantly, Duchess Sayles, can I ask you to not pester Lydia from now on?”

Edgar, in fear of her being taken away, pulled a confused Lydia closer to him.

“Even though I know I’m a terrible man, she still wishes to help me, she’s my precious fiancée.”

Everyone heard that. Lydia blushed. She misunderstood the matters between Edgar and the Duchess, so she firmly raised a proposition against the Duchess. Edgar probably saw that act and he unknowingly embraced Lydia naturally.

“I understand. However, such a cute and pure young lady becoming a victim of a philanderer, it truly is a pity. Miss Carlton, I wish you the best in happiness.”

It seemed that Duchess Sayles had given up and smiled at Lydia, who still hadn’t understood the situation.

“Um, Mr. Nico is missing.”

As Raven interrupted, a distant voice came from the above the dome.

“Heeeeeey, put me doooown....”

Nico seemed to have been snagged on a branch by the necktie and was hanging mid-air in result.

* * *

After the incident, Lydia now understood.

It was a man who held a grudge against Edgar, not a woman.

He will thoroughly mess with the men who resist him. Lydia completely forgot that he was such a person.

Furthermore, Duchess Sayles seemed to be unusually fond of girls, so her relationship with Edgar were that of enemies, yet appeared to be like-minded.

“So that’s why Lydia, it’s necessary to display intimacy occasionally, even in public.”

Edgar had been waiting for Lydia in her study up until now.

“This is to let everyone know that no one can come between us.”

Due to being occupied by marriage preparations, Lydia hadn’t been working recently. Despite trying to tidy up some of her fairy doctor duties, it seemed that Edgar intended to interfere with her work.

“.....I will take note of that.”

Lydia answered as Edgar walked to the side of the table and happily whispered:

“In order to be able to smoothly display it, we will practice.”

“W--what are you saying, I’m working right now.”

Lydia went red in the face and quickly looked away.

“Oh, that’s right, regarding the fruit of the woodwose fairy tree, I know it’s purpose.”

He suddenly changed the topic and held the fruit on the palm of his hand for Lydia to see.

Then, he threw the fruit into the pot of rosemaries on the table.

At that moment, the fruit germinated, blocked all the windows and doors and covered the walls and ceilings; the branches and leaves seemed to extend incessantly as if wanting to cram into the room. Lydia and Edgar were shut in together.

“...Wait, what are you doing! We can’t get out like this!”

Flustered, Lydia ran to the where the door originally was and tried to push away the leaves, but the intertwining branches had no openings at all. Even so, the sun seemed to shine through the branches, and the breeze was filled with the refreshing aroma of trees.

“That’s right, we’re going to be alone together for the time being.”

Edgar took Lydia’s hand, then smoothly sat her down on the sofa and shortened the distance between them.

“This is the most suitable gift for cultivating love.”

“What?”

“We don’t need to worry about someone bothering us, what should we do?”

“Y-you’re asking that question, I..... can’t, Edgar.”

Looking at the troubled Lydia, Edgar happily leaned over.

The more Lydia tried move back and put more distance between them, the more she moved back on the sofa as she grew anxious.

“You said you usually won’t force people like this!”

“But, the matter from before made me realize that it can actually really provoke my desires.”

Pervert. Lydia swallowed those words back.

Although Lydia was pushing his chest back with both hands, he was still motionless like a mountain, forcefully grabbing Lydia’s shoulders.

“My deepest apologies, Lord Edgar.”

Suddenly a voice was heard.

Lydia was startled as she turned and saw Raven standing in the corner of the room.

“I just happened to bring tea.”

It seems like Raven was shut in together with them. Despite his expressionless face, he must have been at a loss.

Even so, it was a kind of salvation for Lydia, because she wasn't alone with Edgar in this space. She thought that, but...

“Well then, Raven, turn around and cover your ears.”

“Yes.”

“.....Why on earth are you agreeing! What are you thinking?!”

After Lydia cried out in earnest, Edgar chuckled and moved away from her.

I was tricked.

Lydia was angry. Edgar knew for certain that Raven had also entered the room from the beginning.

“It can't be helped, come and have some tea. Raven, there are only three people in here now, so there's no need to care about the master-servant relationship, you sit down as well.”

Unexpectedly, Edgar intended to create a time for the three of them to rest

properly. If that was the case, perhaps by doing this he wanted to use this as a pretext to atone towards Raven.

Although Lydia thought that Edgar's action was in a good direction, it might have been just on his whim.

"Lord Edgar, actually, another gift was delivered."

After Raven placed the cups on the table, he also put down a pot made from shells.

"Ohhh, is this also a gift the fairy delivered?"

"The writing says 'do not open'."

"Hmm, what's inside?"

Edgar seemed to have completely ignored the warning sign, thus Lydia raised her voice.

"Doesn't it say it can't be opened?!"

"But you won't know what's inside like this."

"Then let me open it."

When Raven suggested this seriously, Lydia slammed the table and stood up.

"You guys ought to have learned your lesson by now!"

It seems that it would still take a long time for Raven to reach to the point where he will feel burdened by the difficulties that Edgar makes him carry.

[1] The literal meaning in Japanese was bruise. It's also described as a black ink like stain.

Chapter 2: Do you believe in the red string of destiny?

Ah! It's a fairy.

The boy mumbled while watching it before his eyes.

In the corner of the room, her height was nearly that of a table lamp, her hair was tied into a bun, and she wore a withered grass-colored dress. The boy thought to himself that whether it was the other person's solemn expression or how she was neatly and plainly dressed, she very much resembled his female tutor.

However, the tutor would not be this tiny, and the one before his eyes had insect-like wings.

But he wasn't very surprised, because he knew that he was dreaming. That's right, it wasn't the first time he saw fairies in his dreams.

In the dream, the fairy said:

(Young master, I'm sorry that your father passed away, but now is not the time to be grieving.)

I'm not particularly sad.

(As long as you become outstanding in future, good fortune will surely come to your side. Therefore, please get engaged promptly under everyone's suggestion.)

Women are troublesome.

(You can't say such things, because marriage is a noble's obligation.)

Even if that was the case, finding a marriage partner wasn't so easy. The girls that my relatives brought, didn't they all flee? Why do women shed tears so easily?

The fairy seemed to sigh, but it soon puffed out its chest and reorganized its frame of mind.

(Young master, it was inevitable that you wouldn't get along with them, because they were unsuited to you. But you don't have to worry, as long as you meet the destined woman then you will definitely be able to speak of marriage.)

Destined person?

(That is, the person linked with the invisible red string.)

How ridiculous, he thought.

That sort of thing, even children nowadays wouldn't believe.

(Your destined woman really exists. Young master, please believe me, find your future spouse as soon as possible, otherwise, your fortune will slip away.)

Then, the fairy disappeared.

When the boy woke up, a red string was wrapped around the pinkie on his left hand. The red string was coiled around and under the bed and even continued outside from the window.

Inside the Carlton household's parlor, Lydia hadn't enjoyed having tea with a friend like this in awhile.

The Carlton family's daughter --- Lydia, had just announced her engagement recently, so it had always somehow been the topic of conversation with her friend.

"Oh that's right, Lota, the wedding dress' design has arrived, can you help me take a look?"

Lydia's friend, Lota, enthusiastically picked up the design sketches. Although she had her coffee colored hair tied only in a bundle, and the expensive dress she wore didn't match no matter how you looked at it, she didn't mind at all.

"It really isn't bad, I feel that it's elegant and very suited to you."

Being the granddaughter of the exiled Grand Duke yet growing up in the industrial area, Lota, whose background was a little complicated, was unable to blend into aristocratic society, yet she got along with Lydia quite well, who previously only dealt with fairies, and didn't know the dangers of the human world.

"Thank you. But you can't tell Edgar that the design has already been planned."

Naturally, Edgar was Lydia's fiancé. Although he was the Earl, he had actively pursued Lydia, who was not of nobility, making her agree to marry him.

Since then, Lydia had been preparing to marry into the Earl household, and thus lead a hectic life every day.

For her who was busy, having tea with a friend was considered a bit of time to rest.

“Why? Didn’t that guy make a ruckus saying that he wanted you to decide on the dress’ design sooner?”

“According to that Earl's personality, if he knows when the custom-made dress is completed, he will immediately decide the date.”

Joining the topic of the conversation was another friend of Lydia sitting at the table side; that is, a furry gray cat.

Unknown as to how he did it, he simply picked up the tablespoon with his fluffy paw and stirred the milk tea

.

With a bowtie fastened around his neck, he gracefully took a whiff of the aroma of the tea.

Of course, he really wasn’t a cat, but a real fairy. Lydia negotiated and settled disputes between fairies and humans as a fairy doctor and he was her work partner as well as her childhood friend.

“Ah, I see. After all, it can’t be helped that that guy Edgar, wants to take Lydia to bed as soon as possible.”

Lota was clearly a girl, but she often spoke embarrassing words like Edgar. Lydia couldn't deny that and could only lower her blushing face.

“Oh my, you don't have to worry, if you get married too quickly, I'll be urged by my grandfather too.”

“Is that so? Lota, are you also being urged to get married?”

“Don't look at me like that, I'm also around the same age as you.”

Lota smiled faintly and then drank a cup of tea in one go.

“Then, will you get married?”

“Well, if I meet my destined partner, I will get married.”

Having said that, Lota laughed.

“Hahaha, that kind of situation doesn't suit me one bit.”

“However, Lota, regardless of who it is, there's an invisible red string connecting you to your destined partner, isn't that right?”

“That's a superstition. Besides, since it's invisible, how do you know that it's red?”

“Well, it's as you say.”

Regardless of the red string for the time being, if Lota had someone she was fond of and walked on the red carpet naturally, then it ought to be wonderful.

Lydia nodded while captivated as she imagined this.

Lota had a masculine personality, but she also had a lot of charm. Despite her hair being tied into a ponytail with rope, and not wearing a corset or crinoline underneath her expensive dress like a working-class girl, it made people think that she didn't have the appearance of an aristocrat, but if one understood her, they would know that these things were her charming points.

Lota was a little different than usual today. At where her hair was tied by a short rope, something like a red string was fastened around it.

Although it was quite rare, this was also her own style.

"Lota, your hair tie is different than usual today."

"What? It's the same like always."

After Lota said this in surprise, she crossed her legs to the other side.

"But, don't you normally not have that red string?"

"A string? That sort of thing is on my head? Does it look weird?"

Lota reached up to her head, but because it was said to be a string when it was actually a fine thread, there was no way to grab onto it successfully. Lydia stood up and wanted to help her undo the red string wrapped around her hair, when she suddenly uttered "ah" in result.

"What's the matter?"

"It's gone."

"No way, don't joke with me."

“It’s true, I grabbed it and it disappeared like magic.”

This time, another voice came from somewhere.

(Hey, please don’t touch it as you wish! I just finished casting a spell after all that trouble.)

At the same time, there was a tiny body floating in the air emitting light; only a pair of light flapping wings were seen.

“Ohh, is this a fairy?”

Since she stayed by Lydia’s side, Lota also frequently encountered fairies, so she was not surprised by what she saw lately.

“That string was made by your magic?”

The fairy slowly descended onto the table as it fluttered its wings.

After the light weakened, the fairy’s appearance gradually became clearer.

The fairy’s hair was tied into a bun and was dressed plainly. Apart from being very petite with long thin wings, her overall appearance felt like that of a strict tutor.

The fairy’s hands were behind its back as it looked up and stared at Lydia.

(How were you able to discover my magic?)

“Because I’m a fairy doctor. ”

Lydia had often caught sight of fairies casting simple magic.

(Alas, then it can't be helped. Anyhow, it was really difficult for this young lady to be affected by the magic, I used a lot of effort to cast this spell, please do not undo the magic out without permission.)

"Wait a minute, what's going on, why did you cast a spell on me?"

Lota leaned in, staring at the small fairy. Unwavering, the fairy cleared its throat and said:

(Ohh, your personality seems a little harsh.)

"What kind of fairy are you?"

The fairy put its hand on its hips and began to answer Lydia's question.

(Me? I am a righteous fairy godmother, I've been busy marking a seal in order for my adorable godson to find his destined woman sooner.)

"Destined woman?"

(Do you know about the red string? The invisible string that binds one with their future partner, it's that legend.)

"Eh, that legend is true?"

Lota and Lydia looked at each other in dismay.

Nico used his hands to support his cheeks and observed the fairy on the table, whom he hadn't seen before.

(It's normally invisible to the human eye, I'm using magic for my godson so that he can see the red string.)

"Then, Lota is your godson's destined partner?"

(Listen well, fairy doctor, please don't touch the string out of your own accord,

because as soon as you touch it, it will disappear. If the red string simply resumes its invisible state then it's still okay, but if by any chance it truly comes undone, then he won't be able to meet his destined partner, so please be careful.)

The fairy explained quickly as it if was in a hurry.

(Ah! I must cast the magic again to make the red string visible.)

After having said that, the fairy busily waved the twig-like object in its hands.

At that moment, the red string appeared once again in Lota's hair.

"Whoa!"

Nico cried out. His front foot, no, his left paw also had a red string wrapped around his finger.

Lydia was astonished and immediately confirmed that a red string was also wrapped around her pinkie.

The magic that made the red string appear seemed to not only be casted on Lota, rather it affected everyone that was present.

"Hey, why am I the only one with a string on my head?"

(I don't know either, perhaps it's just because of your personality.)

"You mean I'm different....."

Regardless of Lota grumbling, the fairy whispered:

it's complete

. Then, it flapped its wings in satisfaction and flew out the window with an astonishing shooting-star-like speed.

"So, who is that fairy's godson?"

Nico whispered which made Lydia and Lota look at each other in dismay once more.

Although Lydia hurried over to the window to call the fairy back, it vanished.

*

The fairy godmother was a guardian fairy that often appeared in old tales; these kinds of fairies liked to name babies and then protect the child's life.

Sometimes magic was used to help the child.

Although Lydia didn't know what the fairy godmother's standard was in selecting children, she knew that if the fairy godmother helped name the child, it was said that they would have good luck.

But how could this be good?

Lydia thought while gazing at her pinkie.

Does this string truly join a person together with their destined partner?

A long time ago, there was a monster called the minotaur in King Minos' country. There was a young man who wanted to defeat the monster and offered to become a living sacrifice; at that time, the princess gave him a red string in order for him to leave the minotaur's maze-like palace smoothly.

After the young man had finally defeated the monster and followed the red string back, he and the princess got married.

Since then, the red string had been passed down as a thread that linked destined lovers.

Lydia's finger was wrapped around by the red string of that legend. The red string hung down on the floor, the tablecloth was covering the front end of the string so she couldn't see it clearly.

If the red string was really connected to someone, then the string should be extended to the door's slit or the other end of the window, but because the red string was very thin, it couldn't be seen clearly if one did not come close to it.

Even so, if she followed the red string, would she encounter Edgar in the end?

Lydia had already decided to marry him, so there should be no reason to doubt that destiny.

Right now, Lydia was at Edgar's mansion in her fairy doctor study, opening up files to take her mind off things.

Lydia was very familiar with fairies and had the ability in communicating with them, so she was hired by Edgar, who had the distinguished title 'Earl of Ibrazel' and yet knew absolutely nothing about fairies, to work as his consultant.

But ever since the engagement, due to Edgar's recommendation, she had also decided to put work aside and prioritize preparations for the marriage.

Recently, inquiries on fairy matters had lessened, so she had not been disturbed, but because she had spare time today, she planned to organise the desk work.

But not long after she began working, a knock on the door was heard.

It was Edgar who opened the door. As soon as he saw Lydia, he smiled happily.

"Hi Lydia, I heard that you came, so I hurried here."

No matter how you looked at him, it wasn't just his shiny blonde hair that gave a showy and gorgeous impression. Even with just the way he walked made him dashing, along with the brand new colored lining of his frock coat that would casually come into one's vision.

The action of placing his hat on the table was also like a painting.

No matter from what angle he was seen from, he was an elegant aristocrat. This kind of person was unexpectedly getting married with Lydia, and it hadn't felt real to her.

“Didn’t you have an important gathering to attend?”

“Yeah, but I left before I was discourteous.”

“I came today just to handle some of the work that had accumulated for a while, but there’s nothing in fact.”

“You didn’t have plans today? If you said it earlier, we could have spent time together.”

“Didn’t we eat together yesterday?”

“I feel that it isn’t enough. Isn’t that how it is?”

He walked over and gazed at Lydia across the table.

His ash-mauve eyes were too close to Lydia, so she couldn’t help but look down. Just showing this kind of gaze would definitely entice any girl’s heart.

Edgar pulled Lydia’s hand, which held a pen, and dropped the usual kiss that he would offer to a lady.

As Lydia looked down, she couldn't help noticing Edgar's other hand on her desk. Wrapped around his pinky was one,two, three, four, five, six.....

What?

Lydia blinked, staring at his hand.

Unexpectedly, there were countless red strings tangled into a bundle, hanging

from his hand.

She couldn't help wondering what she should do.

Does this mean I'm not the only person fated for Edgar?

Flustered, Lydia stood up suddenly.

"Is something wrong, Lydia?"

"I-it's nothing....."

"Are you unwell?"

Worried, Edgar drew near and reached out to touch Lydia's cheek, but Lydia drew back away from him.

Edgar stubbornly drew closer and Lydia was forced to use both hands to keep him at bay.

"Edgar,am I not enough for you, after all?" she asked miserably.

"What? What are you talking about?"

".....N-no doubt I'm not. I can't even decide on the wedding dress....."

"What are you talking about? That's okay."

"Th-then, is it because I refused to let you kiss me when you saw me home the other day? And you realised that there are lots of cuter girls out there?"

"Umm, Lydia, certainly I'd like it if you'd settle on your wedding dress soon, but....."

"I didn't think you were that unhappy with me....."

Lydia noticed a figure appear in the doorway.

"Lota!" she cried and ran over to her friend for help.

"Lydia, what's wrong?" Lota held Lydia. Lota noticed Edgar standing in the room, and glared at him. "Edgar! What did you do?"

"I haven't done anything yet."

"Yet? So you're planning on doing something. You really are the worst!"

"That's not it, Lota. His hand; look at his hand!"

"Hand? Yeah, they're the hands of a pervert."

"You really are very rude. How about being honest and saying they're sensual?" Edgar asked annoyed. He drew close to Lota and took her hand to annoy her.

"What are you do--"

Lota started to knock Edgar's hand away when she suddenly froze and stared at his hands.

"What is this?"

Apparently you couldn't see another person's red thread without touching their hand first.

"Edgar, you really are the worst!"

Lota, noticing the numerous threads on Edgar's hand, shoved him away. She wrapped an arm protectively around Lydia. Unfortunately for Edgar, he still didn't understand what was going on.

"Lydia, you're not making an sense. And neither are you, Lota. Just what's going on?"

"So, you do see the same thing I do, don't you Lota? I don't know..... what should I do?!"

"You might not have a choice but to break off your engagement."

"Wait! What are you saying I did? Lydia, won't you please explain things in a way I can understand?!"

"Try asking yourself that!" Lota shot back.

"Umm... is something the matter?" The gentle voice that interrupted them was that of Edgar's friend Paul. "I heard the earl was here in Lydia's office....."

"Hey, Paul, you've come at just the right time." Edgar felt like he'd just been thrown a life saver and dragged his unlucky friend into the room. Paul became dismayed when he saw Lota and Lydia standing there with their arms crossed glaring at Edgar.

"Having two girls against just me isn't fair. Now, it's two against two."

"Umm, if you're busy, I'll be leav--....."

"Now, Lydia, and you too, Lota. I'd suggest you start talking if you don't want anything to happen to Paul."

"Whaaaat!"

Paul shrieked as Edgar wrapped his arm around Paul's neck.

Lydia and Lota glanced at one another. They couldn't help feeling sorry for Paul having gotten caught up in things.

"Umm, Edgar, actually....."

The four people sitting at the afternoon tearoom table were completely silent as the attendant, Raven, brewed tea.

"The red string of fate, I don't want to believe that sort of thing."

Edgar muttered.

"Lydia, you are the only one in my heart, and I will never be unfaithful."

"Well, it certainly is easy to say so."

Nico drank the tea; it was unknown as to when he came and sat, but he was probably drawn to the tea's fragrance.

"Could it be a mistake that there are several red strings? That's right, what about Paul? He might have a lot as well."

"Shall we take a look?"

After Lota finished saying this, she grabbed Paul's hand without his permission.

"There's only one."

After the result was announced, Paul heaved a sigh of relief, but Edgar frowned even more.

“Excuse me, I.....”

Raven, who was behind them waiting for orders softly spoke out.

This brown-skinned boy with an exotic appearance was Edgar’s loyal attendant, who was often quite reserved and hardly ever took the initiative to express his opinions. Because of this, even though his voice was extremely quiet, Lydia still noticed it and turned to him.

She looked at him, but because the expressionless Raven didn’t say anything else, Lydia took a moment to understand what he wanted to say.

“Ah, y-yes, Raven you also want to know about the matter relating to the red string, right?”

Raven practically wasn’t showing any emotion. His filled mind only knew how to serve Edgar, so would he be concerned about the red string of fate? If that was truly the case, then it was very pleasing that he matured in this way. Lydia thought while she took his hand.

However, there was no trace of any red strings around his finger or anywhere else.

“Eh? How strange.”

Lydia tilted her head doubtfully and Lota immediately grabbed Raven’s hand afterwards.

“You don’t have a red string.”

Lota clearly informed him. From Raven’s expression, it was difficult to

determine whether or not he took a hit.

“Raven, even though there’s no red string now, it’ll definitely appear one day.”

Lydia said awkwardly as consolation, while also not knowing whether Raven had received it. Raven merely turned to Nico.

“What about Mr. Nico?”

Even though Raven was hardly interested in anyone else besides Edgar, it appeared that he was only aware of Nico as his companion.

“Me? Of course I have a red string.”

Seeing that Nico was hardly apprehensive as he flaunted one of his paws, it appeared that even Raven was unable to hide his dismay.

“.....Is that so..... only I don’t have one.”

“Raven, destiny is dependent on one’s own development. If the person changes to some extent, then the future will also change afterwards. So I believe that the red string has not noticed how much I love Lydia.”

It appeared that it wasn’t only to Raven, Edgar had also wanted to say this to Lydia.

“Despite what others say, I can’t see that red string, furthermore, you can only have one spouse in this country. To go as far as to have not just one destined partner, this is impossible no matter how you think about it, right?”

“There are also those kind of men who let several mistresses other than his

wife live in their residence.”

Nico took out a tabloid newspaper.

“Oh, you’re talking about Lord Grosser. It’s the tabloids’ hot topic.”

“Is it Lord Grosser who passed away the other day?

Rumors arose that the son he wanted to inherit the family property wasn’t his biological son. But it was also said that if this was true, then his son cannot inherit the title.”

Paul said. Since he often went to high-class gatherings as a painter, like Edgar, he would also hear rumors.

“One of the mistresses now claim that Lord Grosser’s wife’s child is in fact her own. Furthermore, the Lord’s wife has also passed away, so their goal is probably the fortune.”

“Ohh, living in the same mansion, it’s very easy for one to lie about who gave birth to the child.”

“.....I wonder why having only a wife wasn’t enough.....”

Lydia sighed and mumbled, while everyone cast Edgar a reproaching look.

“Ah, Lydia, I am by no means that kind of man. I don’t want to speak ill of those who have passed away, but Lord Grosser was wrong. That’s right, one is considered a praiseworthy man if he makes a woman happy, right?”

However, regardless of hearing this, Lydia could not not wipe off the feelings of distrust.

Not knowing whether it was due to her cold gaze, Edgar hesitantly reached out to Lydia's hand and withdrew.

At that moment, the butler, Tomkins appeared.

"My lord, there is a guest. He claims to be Lord Mordant's agent."

Edgar raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Lord Mordant? I've never met him before, what is his business?"

"What should I do?"

"If he doesn't mind that I have other guests, then bring him here. Just when we gossiped a little, you're all curious, aren't you?"

"Gossiped?"

Edgar exposed a satisfied smile at the puzzled Lydia.

"Lord Mordant is Lord Grosser's father. Would you like to ask for the truth regarding those rumors? I will show you clearly that I am not like Lord Grosser."

Under Tomkins's guidance, a middle-aged man with glasses and a boy about twelve or thirteen years old was lead into the tea salon.

The middle-aged man claimed to be a lawyer, the boy that he brought with him was Lord Mordant's grandson, that is, Lord's Grosser's son.

With that said, the subject of gossip regarding the young boy that might be the mistress' son was him.

The young boy had a very dissatisfied look on his face. He glared around at everyone in the room, wide-eyed. When his eyes met Lydia's, he carefully observed her as if judging commodities.

Then he suddenly pointed at Lydia and said:

"It's that woman."

"Young master Alfred."

The lawyer couldn't stop him before he went to Lydia and firmly grasped her hand."

"Hmph, I'll never know unless I try. I originally didn't believe that I would find my fiancée by following this red string."

"What?"

"Look, we're tied together by the red string of fate."

Lydia's eyes widened. Indeed, the same red string tied around the boy's pinky was also wrapped around Lydia's finger.

No way. It... wasn't Edgar.

"Hey, you can see the red string?"

Lota asked instead of Lydia, who was absentminded. However, the boy ignored Lota's question and grasped Lydia's shoulders with both hands.

"The eyes are green. Although I don't really like it, it can't be helped."

Lydia immediately withdrew and Edgar stood between them.

“She’s my fiancée, and if you propose to her, it would mean you’ve come prepared.”

The boy angrily looked at up Edgar.

“What, if you want payment I’ll hand it over. How much do I need to give you?”

Edgar flicked the boy’s forehead hard and the boy staggered, perhaps it was too painful.

“Will you hand over your heart?”

“What do you mean, she’s not much of an extraordinary woman, I just think that if it was fated, then I might as well make her my bride.”

The boy rubbed his forehead as he mumbled, his anger seemingly gone.

Although Lydia could only smile stiffly, this time, Edgar dealt a blow to the boy’s head.

“What on earth are you doing!”

Meanwhile, the lawyer that quietly watched on the sidelines did not stop it. It was probably because his job was merely to run errands on behalf of Lord Mordant, and was not responsible in looking after the young boy.

“Children who don’t understand love and romance have no right to propose

to women.”

But the boy snorted.

“Love, you say? How foolish. The purpose of marriage is to merely make families continue to exist. As long as it is a woman, she can be a wife regardless of who it is, but if she is the destined one, then of course it would be better, this way she won’t perform troublesome things, such as having affairs or running away from home.”

“Oh, so your mother had done these kinds of things? But this can’t be helped, after all, your father allowed several mistresses to live at home.”

The boy grimaced as if he was hurt. Lydia also began to feel sorry for him.

“Wait a minute, Edgar, what you’re saying is too much for a child.”

“He’s not a child. Since his father passed away, he is the head of the family.”

It was rare that Edgar wouldn’t argue preposterously, but rather he refuted Lydia with a genuinely reasonable view. He did not spare any strength in attacking the young boy.

“Alfred-kun, if you truly want to have her,

you shouldn’t be so limited to what you want in a woman, and use your passion and effort to fight for her. Since it’s so troublesome, you follow destiny? Normally, no one will approve of such a pitiable matter, you better go home, lie on your grandmother’s lap and cry.”

The young boy’s face was red, but he did not cry and merely let out a dull

sigh.

“Forget about it, she’s just a woman anyway, it doesn’t matter if it’s not her. Let’s go.”

The boy looked at his lawyer, urging him to leave but the lawyer didn’t intend on going.

“Earl Ashenbert, while it is indeed ill mannered of me, there is something I’d like to discuss with you with this opportunity.”

“Alfred-kun was made to follow the red string of fate up until here and you are conveniently taking the opportunity to discuss matters with me?”

The lawyer shrugged. It appears that he was forced to accompany the boy, who was trying to find the so-called red string.

“We originally intended to pay a visit if anyone could properly introduce us. However, it turned out that asking someone to do that was not required.”

When the lawyer spoke, the boy turned away and left silently.

“Ah, wait.....”

Although Lydia tried to stop him, he left the room without looking back.

“How disrespectful, he’s usually like this, please don’t mind him.”

The lawyer said. He appeared to be only interested in discussing matters now.

Edgar casually pulled Lydia's hand.

He was slightly away from the table, sitting beside Lydia on the sofa. He and Lydia continued holding hands, perhaps it was because he felt that compared to the red string that did not connect them together, actually touching Lydia was more important.

They were undoubtedly engaged, but Edgar wasn't her destined person. Lydia felt uneasy about this, but after seeing the numerous red strings on Edgar's hand, she was unable to frankly withdraw the hand that held his.

"Please sit down, what is it that you wish to negotiate?"

"Yes... it appears that young master Alfred has no chance of love with his destined partner, so we must quickly arrange a different marriage. But so far, there hasn't been any favourable responses from any family household."

"He's only twelve or thirteen years old, right? Why must he be engaged so urgently?"

"This is his grandfather, Lord Mordant's idea. You should also be aware of the strange rumors that were recently spread, that he wants to ascertain the position of lord as soon as possible. Lord Mordant said that if young master Alfred was able to get engaged, then he will be acknowledged as the successor."

If he isn't the official wife's child, then he can't inherit the title. Having said that, if the rumors were disregarded, Alfred should still be the successor

according to the documents, but even then, it's difficult for others to recognize the legitimate rights possessed by a boy who is still young and unsupported. Whether or not he can inherit the family property was perhaps dependent on the family head, Lord Mordant's decision.

"Lord Grosser's lustful life and bad rumors had always made Lord Mordant angry, so he thinks that if young master Alfred was subject to his bad influence, he will be unsuited to become the heir. The lord especially attaches importance on his female relationships being faithful rather than dishonest."

"So that's how it is. Since he believes that it's very troublesome no matter what kind of woman she is, and as long as he can decide on his marriage partner, he would not have any other requests, right?"

"Yes. It's just that he's slowly unable to decide on his marriage partner.....that's also due to the influence of those bad rumors but..."

If it's possible that he is not the heir, then he will certainly be avoided, as other families base their decisions on family bloodline and conditions alone.

"Currently, only one family still hasn't replied, and if possible, I hope that you, Earl Ashenbert, can lend a hand."

"Is the family well-acquainted with me?"

"That's right, it's the Grand Duke of Cremona's princess. I've heard that she is an eccentric who stays at home and doesn't make social appearances, but there's nothing to be said regarding her family background. I've also heard that the Grand Duke was quite troubled over the Princess' future, as she is of marriageable age..."

"What? Don't make me laugh, I won't marry that little demon!"

Lota vigorously stood up, almost turning the table over.

Edgar introduced her once more to the surprised lawyer.

“She is the Princess of Cremona, Princess Charlotte. ”

“What!”

The person who called out was Paul.

“So Paul didn’t know?”

“Oh, I don’t think I told him. ”

From Lota’s face, it appeared that she didn’t care.

“Is this..... t--true.....”

“Yup, I’m not the least bit noble, right? Due to some reasons, I grew up in the East End of London.”

The East End of London...

Lord Mordant’s lawyer whispered. Lota turned to him and said:

“I don’t think you guys are willing to set an engagement with that of woman, but overall, I have no interest in a political marriage!”

At that moment, Edgar suddenly stood up.

“I understand, then it’s up to me to convince the Grand Duke.”

“Wait, Edgar.”

Lydia had a look of surprise and Lota gaped.

“Regardless of where she grew up, Princess Charlotte is a very caring woman. Even if it’s a love-troubled man like Alfred, she is certainly capable of supporting while properly manipulating, no, properly assisting others.”

“Hey, mind your own business!”

“Please consider it carefully, Lota. Nobody will try to find you and discuss such a good marriage ever again.”

“Y--you, it’s because Lydia’s red string is connected together with that little demon’s, so you just wanted to lump me in together with him, right!”

“You actually figured it out. ”

“There’s no reason why I couldn’t!”

“If the engagement is not settled, then he may become obsessed with Lydia. If he settles his marriage proposal quickly, then judging from the current situation, he might forget about the existence of the red string.”

“You only care about yourself!

“As a matter of fact it isn’t like that, but I really don’t care about you.”

Edgar and Lota were like this every time. Despite making others think that they do not get along well, Lydia knew that their friendship seemed to have grown since the past, so she did not sigh.

“Earl! I--I had no idea you were such a person!”

This time, Paul stood up.

Everyone was taken aback by this unexpected situation and they could not help but look at Paul.

“Even if you’re engaged now... for you to go as far as to treat a woman that you’ve associated with in the past like this...”

“Associated? With who?”

Edgar tilted his head.

“It was with Lota! Since she’s become a hindrance, you think it’s all right to push her towards other men? Just because she’s still thinking about you now, she is trying to be good friends with you and Miss Lydia.”

Edgar and Lota looked at each other in surprise.

“To go as far as to say that you have nothing to do with the commendable Lota is going too far!”

“Umm, Paul... you’re mistaken...”

Although Lota tried to deny it, Paul continued on in one breath:

“Earl, I originally believed that you had become earnest after your engagement with Miss Lydia... and yet you... because you were so casual with women, there is more than one red string now!”

Paul’s emotions were stirred up, apparently he really misunderstood.

Lydia and Lota fell silent, bewildered to the point of not knowing what to say.

After a moment of silence, Edgar let out a chuckle.

“This is too funny.”

He said, as he burst out laughing.

As the situation was too strange, this time, Paul looked flabbergasted.

“Hey Paul, although I said that I’ve had an ill-fated relationship with Edgar before, you wouldn’t believe that it was a relationship between a man and woman, right?”

“Eh, but Lota, the Earl once said that he wouldn’t be just friends with women...”

“Lota is a woman? Her chest is flatter than Raven’s.”

Raven, who was standing in the corner of the room awaiting orders, was suddenly being compared. He put his hands on his chest, not knowing what to think.

“What? That was several years ago! It’s already grown a lot now!”

“Umm... Earl Ashenbert...”

Lord Mordant’s lawyer gingerly interrupted. In this increasingly fierce dispute, that pompous girl unexpectedly turned out to be the Princess of Cremona. It seemed that he was not able to accept this fact.

“Oh, I apologize but sir, Alfred wouldn’t care about chest size, I think she can at least have children.”

“Edgar! You rascal!”

“Uh, was I wrong? Lota and the Earl.. didn’t have that kind of relationship?”

Paul scratched his head.

Lydia, amongst the chaotic room, glanced at something.

Edgar had numerous red strings around his pinky. Although she realized that Paul's anger was a complete misunderstanding, Edgar was a person who would provoke misunderstandings to begin with, and this was where the problem lied.

Even if there were numerous red strings around Paul's finger, then others would think that there must be some mistake.

Lydia gradually grew angry as she approached Edgar and asked:

"Edgar, why would you know this?"

"Eh, know what?"

"That Lota's... you weren't peeping at her, right..."

"Oh my, Lydia, don't get me wrong. That was because Lota often used to swim naked in the harbor, and even if she did, no one noticed. Because of this, people didn't think she was a woman."

After having heard this, the lawyer was wide-eyed and his body went stiff. The naked swimming Princess must have destroyed his imagination.

But once Lydia got angry, she wouldn't even notice that guests were still in the room.

".....T--to even joke about a person's body, is really horrible!"

She immediately turned and ran out of the room.

“It serves you right! In any case, your fickle heart can never be cured, being hated by Lydia is your fate!”

“Damn, what’s with this red string of fate, our feelings can’t be destroyed by that sort of thing!”

Having heard Edgar’s furious voice, she closed the afternoon tea room doors.

*

If that really was the red string of fate, then Lydia was destined to marry that boy named Alfred. Edgar would then live surrounded by women other than Lydia.

Even if she went contrary to her destiny and married Edgar, would there inevitably be a day where the same outcome arises?

If Lydia alone couldn’t satisfy Edgar... and if he brought other women to the mansion...

How could I endure that sort of thing?

“Lydia, are you depressed?”

Not long after Lydia seemingly fled and returned home, Lota came to find her.

“....A little.”

“Oh my, although a man having so many red strings will make others think that it’s very ridiculous and that he’ll probably be a philanderer for a lifetime, I

don't think he'll do things that will make you hate him."

Lydia nodded, and she had absolutely no doubt about Edgar's feelings for her.

"How frivolous, talking about chest size, it was only because he didn't treat me like a woman, so he won't have any complaints of you."

"Th--that sort of thing... I don't care about it at all."

Lydia blushed in response.

She was actually a little concerned.

A more important matter was the red string of fate. Currently in this engagement, it was only natural that she would feel uneasy about the unpredictable future, but once a person knows that their partner was the destined one, wouldn't it make them more nervous?

"Hey Lota, what kind of person is the so-called 'destined one' anyways?"

Was it a person that you liked more than anyone else? Or was it someone who was able to let you live securely and happily?"

"Well, even if you were connected by the red string, you can't fall in love with that kid either. But Lydia, don't you find it a little strange? This string is supposed to be invisible, right? We can only see it because of the fairy magic. That being said, can Alfred see the red string like us because of the magic?"

Lydia also felt a little concerned.

"Yes, since he followed the red string skeptically, it meant that someone wanted him to do it."

The fairy godmother had certainly casted magic on Lota for her godson, so the fairy must have used the same magic on the boy.

But if Alfred was the godson, then he didn't realize that the red string wasn't connected to Lota, but rather to Lydia.

While Lydia thought this, she heard a small voice.

(Fairy doctor! Hey, you said that you're a fairy doctor, right?)

A familiar petite figure lightly fluttered as it entered the room through the window.

"Fairy godmother? What happened this time?"

(Ahh, that's great, fortunately someone can hear me.)

The fairy staggered and onto the table, gasped for breath and said desperately:

(It's terrible, my godson... my young master doesn't know who he's been kidnapped by... Fairy doctor, can I ask you to follow the red string and find his whereabouts? Please save the young master!)

If he was kidnapped, then it wasn't a small matter. Lota and Lydia exchanged a look.

"Then is it possible as long as I follow my red string?"

“Lota, wait a moment. Fairy godmother, your godson wouldn’t be Alfred of the Mordant family, right?”

(Yes, that’s right. Ahh, his father just passed away, his heart must be quite uneasy, and now this happens.....)

The fairy began to weep.

“I’ve seen him, but his red string wasn’t connected to Lota, but with me.”

(Oh my!)

The fairy soon stopped crying and began to look around restlessly.

“I really... how could I have made such a mistake... the young master should have been searching for the Princess of Cremona.)

“In other words, in order to make him discuss marriage with Lota, you tied a red string on them without permission, but it was accidentally tied to me in result? In that case, the red string has nothing to do with destiny?”

Lydia gave a condemning glance at the fairy.

The fairy nervously shook her head, denying it.

(What you see really is the red string of fate. But one can also fail to follow the red line to find their destined partner even if they can see it. People are completely incapable of realizing their own fate... so, I wanted to at least connect the young master with a string to a woman he’d discuss marriage with.)

The red string was real. In that case, then even from now on, Edgar will probably get into a close to multiple women.

It would be fine if they were to assume that everything the fairy godmother said was a lie, but the visible string that the fairy spoke of was real. Lydia was completely sullen.

However, now was not the time to be dejected.

“In short, we have to find that boy.”

(I beg of you, fairy doctor.)

“So, it’s possible as long as we follow my red string.”

Once Lydia stood up, Lota did so as well.

Lota said that if she were to get close to the whereabouts of Alfred, who might have been kidnapped, it might be dangerous in a situation with only women, so she brought Raven along.

Since this time, Lydia’s string had to be followed, she originally feared that things would get complicated if Edgar got involved, but it just so happened that he wasn’t home.

The three of them and the fairy godmother arrived at an old building located at the south of London, beside the Thames river.

“Is Alfred inside?”

(I’ll go and see.)

The fairy slowly flew towards the red string that lead to the window.

Lydia and the others waited in the shadows.

“Hey, where did that guy Edgar go?”

Lota said to pass the time.

“Lord Edgar told me not to tell Miss Lydia.”

Raven replied, with his usual straightforward attitude.

He ought to have one or two women by his side, Lydia sighed. Because Lota felt that she had asked something unnecessary, she clicked her tongue.

“Oh I know, wouldn’t that guy want to do something to restore his reputation? That’s right, because he felt a sense of crisis with the red string, I don’t think he’d be cheating at this time.”

Was that so? But even then, Lydia did not know how to look upon the matter of the red string. Now it was difficult to pretend that she was unaware.

“Oh speaking of which, I haven’t seen Nico around. At the tea salon back then, he disappeared before we knew it and he wasn’t in Lydia’s house either.”

Lota tried to change the subject.

“Mr. Nico is following his red string to find his partner. ”

“Eh, he wouldn’t be thinking of finding his destined partner, right?”

Although Nico was a fairy, he seemed to care a lot about destiny. However, the fairy godmother said that one’s partner can’t be found by following the red string.

Overall, she felt a little sorry for Nico.

“Ah, hey, look...”

.....No, how could I not be connected together with Edgar?

She waved Alfred's hand away.

"I am definitely connected with Edgar! Because I've already decided to stay by his side!The two of us decided that, we promised!"

Regardless of how the red string of fate was connected, her bond with Edgar was real.

Alfred frowned in confusion but Lydia stood up.

"We haven't been sold yet, we're still in London!"

I don't want to give up.

Just when she thought that, the sound of the door unlocking was heard.

"Hey, get out."

The man who had brought the two of them here appeared.

Alfred and Lydia couldn't resist and didn't know what was going to happen, as they were brought out of the basement with their hands tied and eyes blindfolded.

The two of them were taken to another room. After they heard the sound of the door opening, Lydia was pushed a few steps forward and felt the breeze brushing against her face.

To say the least, it wasn't a basement; it was probably a room with open windows.

Lydia was still looking for a chance to escape.

“These are the two people to be sold.”

She felt someone stand up from its chair, were they brought before the trafficker?

If the window was open, they might be able to escape. They had only ascended one flight of stairs after coming out from the basement, so this was probably the first floor.

While Lydia thought desperately, the person in front of her spoke.

“I heard there was only a boy.”

Surprised, Lydia looked up.

She felt that it was Edgar’s voice.

“Yes, because of certain matters, there is an extra person. But with this young girl, we can find a buyer right away.”

“How troublesome, girls like her will immediately die if thrown into the bottom of a ship. On the other hand, the risk in selling nearby is too high.”

The tone of his speech was a lot like those in shady businesses, but it was indeed Edgar’s.

His hand that pretended to be identifying goods touched Lydia. She felt Edgar’s fingertips brushing her lips, as if asking her not to make a sound and so she nodded lightly.

“Forget it, just take them away.”

As long as they could get out like this, it would be alright.

Not long after Lydia was at ease, the door was suddenly forced open.

“Who are you people! You intend to steal my goods?!”

Have the real traffickers appeared?

Someone restrained Lydia roughly, and she knew that Edgar’s hand had left her.

“Seize him!”

Lydia was resisting the force that was trying to pull her away.

The man who seized her cried out and his grip loosened.

“Edgar! Where are you?”

Someone moved behind Lydia. Her hands were immediately untied, and her covered eyes could see light again.

It was Raven.

Raven gently pushed her forward, and was hugged by Edgar who was there.

“Lydia, this way.”

Lydia quickly grabbed onto Alfred’s coat. Edgar quickly entered the room from another door, holding onto Lydia as they ran down the staircase leading underground.

Surrounded by darkness, the three of them explored their way forward in the

dark for some time.

The underground tunnels were criss-crossed, Edgar said that it was the ruins of an ancient church.

Although sounds from their pursuers came, they gradually became distant. Just as she thought that, a light was approaching.

“Lydia, Edgar, where are you guys?”

“It’s Lota.”

She ran over carrying an oil lamp.

“Are you okay? Thank god.”

“How’s the situation above?”

Edgar asked.

“The police will come soon, it’s safer to stay here until then.”

“Why are Edgar and Lota here.....?”

Approaching the light in Lota’s hand, Lydia was finally able to confirm with her eyes that it was Edgar.

She looked at Edgar, who still had an incredible appearance.

“I went to meet Lord Mordant and heard many things. Originally, I wanted to make it clear and ask Alfred to not have immoral feelings towards my Lydia, but he informed me of some very complicated matters.”

Although Alfred frowned, looking at the traces of rope marks remaining on his hands after being untied, he was silent with a look of displeasure.

“Complicated matters?”

“Hasn’t Lord Grosser, Lord Mordant’s eldest son passed away? That way, the successor of Lord Mordant would be his second son, then the son of the second son, and because Lord Grosser died earlier than his father, Alfred cannot inherit the title.”

Lydia nodded. She knew that, but she didn’t know that Lord Mordant had a second son. In that case, the problem of whether or not Alfred was able to inherit the title didn’t exist from the beginning.

“Lord Mordant’s second son’s whereabouts had been unknown for a long time, he was thought to be dead, but recently there have been news brought from the other side of the world. ”

“He’s still alive?”

“Lord Mordant was somewhat doubtful, as the person was too far. It’s quite difficult to directly confirm the identity of that person himself. Furthermore, Lord Mordant is prone to illness with his old age. So he believed that the person who was deceptively claiming to be his second son would remain in a foreign country to stall for time before he passed away.”

“But even if something happened to Lord Mordant, as long as other family members see the person, wouldn’t they know whether or not he’s the real son?”

“Then what happens if his second son dies not long after Lord Mordant does? Even if a person appears whom the entire clan doesn’t recognize, as long as he asserts that he is the second son, he can inherit the title.”

Although Alfred turned his head in disinterest, it seems that he had heard

everything Edgar said.

“For the time being, Lord Mordant has been deferring the legal proceedings to resurrect his second son who is deemed dead. Even so, while he’s putting it on hold, he noticed that there was a disturbance around Alfred, furthermore, rumors spread saying that he isn’t his wife’s first son.”

“Alfred being targeted... as long as he disappears, then Lord Mordant has no other choice but to acknowledge the second son.”

“That’s right, in order to make those guys’ attention shift from his grandson, Lord Mordant acted like he didn’t want to acknowledge him. But in the end, it actually escalated into a kidnapping.”

“Then, he insisted that Alfred be engaged for others to see?”

Edgar saw Lota nod.

“Presumably to eliminate the loose impression Lord Grosser gave others. Lord Mordant seemed to be stalling for time while investigating, he had already discovered the man’s evil intentions, and was in the process of strengthening the surroundings to capture them in one fell swoop.”

At the moment it happened, Lydia and the others were dragged in. After Lydia was taken away, Lota and Raven rushed to Edgar, who was just with Lord Mordant.

“Fortunately, we already knew of their hideout, but after knowing that they were taken away, I asked him to change the plan.”

Edgar gazed at Lydia, reaching towards her cheek in relief.

“The plan of pretending to be a human trafficker?”

“Because I wanted to ensure your safety before the police burst in. But I didn’t think the real traffickers would appear so early.”

“Even if I was sold, it doesn’t matter.”

The boy suddenly whispered.

“Didn’t you want to escape through the window?”

As soon as Lydia pointed that out, he angrily fell silent.

“Everyone is worried about you. Your grandfather and fairy godmother are worried.”

“Whoever inherits that kind of title, it’s all the same. Even if it was me or my uncle’s son with suspicious origins, it’s all the same.”

He said with his expression of disinterest.

“Because I am not the son of the first wife, and grandfather probably doesn’t know... my real mother was one of my father’s mistresses. She died soon after she gave birth. The nanny found a diary underneath the floor, but my father ordered the nanny to take me to Mother to replace her stillborn son. The diary was immediately burned and Mother knew nothing about it, my father had been lying to her and the people around him. Although the truth and rumors are different to each other, they’re also very similar.”

Even having confessed something extremely ridiculous, he spoke coldly as if saying they’re somebody else’s problem.

“But don’t you believe in the fairy from your dreams? Because you believed that you would be acknowledged by your grandfather, you followed the red string, right?”

The fairy godmother was probably encouraging him in his dream, and perhaps he felt that only the fairy was by his side.

“It was just on a whim. Because if I inherited the title, I would have brought shame to the family.”

Although he replied like that, Lydia didn’t believe him, if he really didn’t care about it at all, then he wouldn’t have believed the fairy.

“It’s going to be alright.”

Edgar suddenly smiled gently.

“Was he not brought up and raised as Lord Grosser’s first son?”

Alfred looked up in surprise.

“When I was around your age, my parents also passed away. That lonely feeling was like suddenly standing at the bow of a ship, being tossed about by the stormy sea. Your decision will affect the direction of the household that your ancestors have built. Although you talk about whether or not you ought to inherit the title, if you have this kind of doubt, it means that at least you have the pride and are aware of the household’s name.”

Despite Alfred listening to Edgar with a look of disinterest, teardrops fell from his eyes that moment.

He rubbed his eyes as if he was surprised.

“It’ll really be alright.”

Edgar rubbed Alfred's head as he continued to shed tears in silence.

Perhaps he was unable to shed tears until now.

Edgar gazed gently at Alfred, whose tears wouldn't stop, but Lydia noticed one thing.

From the beginning since his parents were murdered, Edgar must've not cried; perhaps he had been able to smile, but he might not have shed tears for his family's death and his own tragedy.

Lydia could only lightly lean against him.

Even if Edgar was destined to more than one woman, as long as his heart could be free someday, it would be fine if she was the one who could stay by his side like this. Lydia was in a trance as she thought this.

"Lord Edgar. "

Raven's voice came from the depths of the tunnel.

"Everyone is subdued, it is safe."

Once they were outside, even the slightly overcast sky felt extraordinarily bright.

Lord Mordant's lawyer came to get Alfred. He seemed really worried, and as soon as he saw Alfred's face, he immediately rushed over.

"Young master Alfred, are you hurt?"

"I'm fine."

"Lord Mordant is waiting for you, but if you are tired, it might be better to head over tomorrow."

"No, I'll leave now."

Lota put her hand on the boy's shoulders.

"Hey, do you want me to come with you? I can't marry you, but if you just want acknowledgment from your grandfather, even if it means making a false engagement, it doesn't really matter to me."

Alfred turned and gave a frank smile to Lota.

"...Thank you, Princess Charlotte. But I'd like to make it clear with my grandfather."

After he said that, he looked at Lydia.

"Fairy doctor, thank you. If you see my fairy godmother, could you tell her I said thanks?"

"Yes, of course."

"Oh that's right, Earl Ashenbert, she says that regardless of how many red strings you have, she decided to stay by your side."

"Ah, w--wait a minute! Alfred!"

It was too late for Lydia to panic as she was embraced by Edgar.

"Really? Lydia, I'm so happy."

"Th--that was because..... we were locked up underground, and heard that we were going to be sold overseas..... I just didn't want that, I thought."

If you think about it, it was actually quite dangerous.

Although it was thanks to Lord Mordant who prepared the siege, they really might have been sold off.

“Regardless of how far of a place you have been brought to, I will be prepared to chase after you. I will follow this red string to find you.”

Numerous red strings.

“You can’t see them... even if you could, which string would you follow?”

“Yeah, but you see, I think it’s mysterious how I haven’t lost sight of you. After all, didn’t we meet? Even when we were far apart, we were still able to meet each other.”

Was this by chance? Or by destiny?

However, no matter what happens, Lydia also felt that it was mysterious at how she would certainly return to his embrace.

The arms that embraced Lydia’s back turned her around and pulled her into a tight embrace. Lydia looked around, completely unable to move.

Lota and Alfred had already left quickly, and only Raven was left standing there, looking away.

They were left with no one around the ruins of the church, so Lydia relaxed and accepted Edgar’s kiss.

* * *

“Hey Paul, are you still dejected?”

While Lota was visiting, Paul was in a corner of the boarding house which doubled as a studio, sitting in front of a canvas, puzzled.

His hands were completely motionless and he did not seem to be pondering ideas.

Lota's voice frightened him so much that he almost fell out of his chair.

"Lo--Lota... ah, no, Lady..."

"It's fine calling me Lota, same as before."

"Eh, t--that's right..... my apologies."

Paul sighed, it was because of his strange misunderstanding that he said many things to Edgar, so he felt very down.

"Edgar doesn't care at all. Didn't he laugh? Suddenly making it out to be an affair, it wasn't even seen as a bad joke to him."

"But... I've also been quite rude to you."

"Me? Well, I was a little shocked."

"I'm sorry."

"No, Paul, you defended me, didn't you? Furthermore, I now know that some people regard me as a woman."

Lota snorted with laughter, and Paul had an expression of disbelief.

"But you don't look like a man."

"Yeah, at least I'm wearing a skirt. But how do I put it? Most people who see me, their first impression branded in mind be as a woman. No matter how close I was with the opposite sex, there wouldn't be any scandals."

Is that so? Paul still couldn't understand.

“Then... what about your marriage?”

Lota was stunned for a moment and didn't understand what Paul was asking.

“That? Well, I was rejected by Alfred.”

Lota burst out laughing. She always felt that her mood seemed to be getting better. Because when asked about her marriage, it sounded like a question to be asked to a lady.

“Lota, there are others out there who will be more suitable for you.”

Paul rushed to comfort her. Why did it seem like he was talking to a girl?

“You've said that before.”

“Eh, is that so? ”

“Thanks, only you, Paul, would say this. Oh that's right, this is for you.”

Lota handed a small box to Paul. He opened the box in surprise.

As a result, something jumped out.

“Whoa!”

Paul was frightened and fell backwards as a hedgehog climbed onto his head. After Paul shook it off, it curled up on the floor.

Finding it amusing, Lota burst out laughing.

“Were you scared? That's cute.”

Lota gently picked up the hedgehog and approached him. The hedgehog crept into his hand and stared at Paul, who smiled.

“Someone should be raising it, it has a tied ribbon. Until I find it’s owner, I’ll leave it at your place and I’ll come to help take care of it too.”

Lota spoke as she put the hedgehog back into the box and reached out to Paul.

She inadvertently looked at Paul’s hand, but the red string was already gone. The red string that was wrapped around Lota’s hair had also disappeared; the fairy godmother’s magic had probably been undone.

“Well..... that’s fine but. You really are an unpredictable.”

Paul got up and laughed a little in disbelief. He was no longer dejected.

People can’t follow the red string of fate to find another person, but that string is connected to someone, somewhere. This was mysterious yet exciting.

Even if she couldn’t see the red string, this feeling remained in Lota’s heart.

Nico sensed a nice aroma suddenly coming from somewhere, and suddenly opened his eyes.

It was the smell of deep-fried fish, Nico felt hungry as soon as he thought this. But now, he wanted to get up and follow the red string of fate to find his destined partner.

He originally wanted to rest a little, but he seemed to have been sleeping for

awhile. Nico got up from the grass, and thought that he needed to quickly continue searching.

“Red string, red string...”

He spread out his paws to confirm, but he couldn't see any red strings. He quickly looked at his feet, but he couldn't find it there either.

Was the magic undone? Nico sighed and slumped on the ground.

Where is this place? Nico walked a long distance following the red string, but when he looked around, he was actually surrounded by a familiar scenery.

In front of him were flower beds, statues made into fountains, and tall trees that were equally spaced apart; there were stone buildings all around that were taller than these trees.

“This place is the courtyard of the Earl's mansion.”

Although he followed the red string endlessly, Nico seemed to be going in circles near the Earl's mansion.

“Arghh, what is up with this?”

Nico collapsed onto the grass in annoyance, but then he smelt the aroma of gourmet food.

He suddenly discovered the red string coiled around his tail, then hastily got up and began to follow it.

Appearing before the balcony, the red string extended past the table. Nico jumped onto the balcony.

At that moment, the object that caught Nico's eyes was a deep-fried fish tied with a red string.

"Good morning, Mr. Nico."

Raven was standing to the side.

Nico looked at Raven, then at the fried fish, and suddenly realized something.

".....Ugh, my destined partner turned out to be deep-fried fish."

Because it really was too funny, Nico clutched his stomach as he laughed. Raven was probably thinking hard about what would make Nico happy, and so he tied the red string to it.

This was in order to replace the red string of fate, which couldn't be found no matter where he looked.

"This smell is truly fragrant."

His partner, who was difficult to find, was fried fish; perhaps this too was a beautiful destiny.

"Would you like to try the potatoes?"

Raven seemed somewhat satisfied.

After the fairy godmother waved her small wand, the red string wrapped around Lydia's finger disappeared immediately. Edgar's strings were also gone.

(And like this, it's back to the way it was.)

The fairy godmother was pleased, and danced back and forth between them.

She was so happy, because things were going well with Alfred.

“Oh that’s right, fairy godmother, even if it’s invisible, does the red string of fate truly exist?”

Edgar asked.

(Of course.)

"Everyone was saying that I have several threads, but do you also see it that way?"

“Edgar, that doesn’t matter anymore.”

The red string was originally invisible, and even if everyone felt that they could see the red string via the fairy godmother’s magic, that didn't mean that was really how things looked.

Lydia thought to herself that it was okay not knowing the truth.

Because there wasn’t anything more genuine than the promise made between her and Edgar.

“However, Lydia, I can’t let this go. It's like I've been branded as being a philanderer even before marriage."

He was a philanderer when we met, but he isn’t like this now. Lydia thought.

However, Edgar extended his hand towards the fairy godmother, and she stared at his hands in amazement.

'I see, the earl has a lot of love.'

"Like I said, it doesn't matter anymore."

Lydia had decided to believe in Edgar, so she didn't want to hear anything that might endanger that.

(Since you have an endless supply of love, one red string wasn't enough. Nevertheless, if all those red strings become one, it will be extremely laborious for the Earl's destined woman because of his excessive love.)

What? Lydia frowned, and the fairy hurriedly bowed.

'Well, I'll be leaving,' she said vanishing quickly out the window.

Lydia nervously looked at Edgar.

Edgar grinned as he walked towards her. He placed his hand on the back of the chair, and gazed at Lydia from behind.

"It's great that the truth was made clear."

Not only that, he whispered with his lips almost brushing her ear.

"Ye....yeah. "

"It's difficult, but you alone are going to have to live with being the focus of countless people's worth of my love from here on."

Chapter 3: A ribbon is the dress code for duels

Part 1

"Earl Ashenbert, please help me."

The young lady looked very pale as her shoulders trembled.

After the young Earl heard what she had to say, his graceful eyebrows were motionless as he replied:

"Madame, isn't it your husband's responsibility to challenge the man who snuck into your room to a duel?"

"My husband is new to the aristocracy, so he doesn't quite understand why we have to fight for our reputation. But Earl, you understand these things, right? Coming from a family with a long history, the belief that one must fight for honor would surely be planted deeply."

She proved herself to be an arrogant aristocrat, as her emotions were shown through her tone of voice.

"However, I am a feeble woman, and I can't use weapons, so I ask that you act as my agent....."

"I understand how you feel."

But it was as if the Earl wanted to interrupt her.

"However Madame, dueling is illegal, even if it's virtuous with regards to old nobility, in the modern world it's actually a violation against social norms."

"You also acted as a witness to a duel once before, isn't that so? Although you've said this, deep down you ought to think that dueling is the justice of aristocracy as well, this isn't something that commoners understand."

"Justice...is that so?"

The Earl raised the corners of his mouth gently, as if ridiculing what he doesn't believe to be justice.

His beautiful appearance gave off a sense of threat.

"I will only fight when I can no longer tolerate the other person's existence."

This lady's impression of him was that of a gentle personality who treated others kindly, so she felt somewhat suspicious at his demeanor.

"But you've helped delicate women in the past."

"That could be considered as a small kind of entertainment."

"Entertainment..."

The Earl stood up, as if he was forcing her to leave.

"But from now on, I will only accept duels for the sake of my beloved fiancée."

(1)

The early summers were the most exciting times for London's socializing season. Earl Ashenbert, the number one celebrity in society, didn't appear at

this time, and this was the main topic that spread throughout London.

Edgar Ashenbert had the uncommon title, Earl of Ibrazel, and because of his young and handsome appearance, he suddenly became popular in society.

Since his relationships with females were all exciting, it wasn't known how many dames and young ladies he had scandals with, but strangely enough, nothing was heard about a bad reputation.

In this new era of emerging aristocracy that was prominent, he not only inherited the Earl's title which had been passed down from the Middle Ages, he possessed the aristocratic demeanor of the fine olden ages, and his skillful words as well as his presence in the Queen's court attracted interest, so both men and women greatly admired him.

As Earl Ashenbert did not appear, it was no wonder that the reason for not appearing was immediately spread throughout society.

In fact, it wasn't any important reason.

It was only because he was wounded and so his physical condition wasn't good, therefore he had to rest at home.

However, this matter was spread as fast as when he announced his engagement not long ago, so now, the guests visiting the Earl's mansion have never stopped.

"My lord, there is a visitor."

The butler, Tomkins came to report to Edgar, as he was still resting in the morning.

“Is it Lydia?”

Edgar put down the booklet he was reading, completely expecting his fiancée’s name to be said, but the butler shook his head.

What! He muttered.

If he had to deal with each and every visiting guest then he couldn’t rest, so Tomkins would inform him only when special guests came to visit that couldn’t be refused.

Tomkins came to report just now, but it wasn’t his fiancée visiting, it seemed that if it wasn’t a guest of high status, he needed to judge whether it was necessary for his master to meet them.

“So, who is it?”

Edgar asked, after pulling himself together.

“It’s Constable Gordon of the London police.”

“Hmm, then it doesn’t seem likely that he’s coming to visit as a guest visiting the sick.”

Although he was injured, his ribs were only slightly broken. Even if the people around him said that the wound’s bleeding was quite serious, these weren’t serious injuries to Edgar.

Despite forcing himself and sleeping for nearly three days, as long as the fever reduced, then it wasn’t serious enough to require a full rest. Although he was unoccupied to the point of agitation as a result, Lydia was worried about him, and so he had to stay inside the mansion.

It seemed that she took the doctor’s instructions to rest too seriously.

Edgar, who was bored, immediately went out for a stroll with a visiting guest that day, so Lydia turned pale with fright and did not speak to Edgar for the whole day; since then, he avoided meeting guests as much as possible.

Compared to obtaining her heart and investing his hard effort all the way, short-term boredom wasn't anything serious at all.

Lydia was finally more willing to face marriage compared to before, and also agreed to have the wedding sooner.

Edgar was injured from protecting her from the hands of the giant clan, and so Lydia was willing to respond to his feelings.

Now, he didn't want to make Lydia even more angry.

Tomkins also held the same idea without a doubt, so he may have decided that he didn't need inform his master that the officer was visiting, but he approached Edgar, meekly blinking with his wide set of eyes, and said:

"My lord, the officer seems suspicious on whether or not you will duel."

Edgar seemed to remember telling a friend that he sustained injuries in order to protect his fiancée from thugs. The situation might have been exaggerated from here.

Duels were forbidden, but currently there were many aristocrats dueling, because the reasons for dueling were mostly associated with women.

"That way, it might be best to listen to the constable's advice."

Edgar stood up.

Constable Gordon was a character who would help Edgar out in all sorts of places, and it seemed that in order to eliminate the suspicions of a duel as soon as possible, he had come to visit.

"Earl, you're healthier than I thought."

There was almost no change in the middle-aged officer's face, it appears that no one has ever seen his curled beard or evenly parted hair in a mess.

"It isn't anything serious, my fiancée loves to worry."

Since the officer came because of the rumors, he must have believed that Edgar's injuries were very serious, but after having waited at the reception room and entering, the only difference of Edgar from usual was that he was wearing his morning gown.

"I heard that you came across thugs, is that true?"

"I did not have a duel."

"So, do you still remember the criminal's features?"

The officer began the routine inquiry, presumably in order to come up with an event in which Edgar did not have a duel, rather than creating a victim's file.

This, of course, was not a problem for Edgar.

“I think, I remember that their beard was quite long, his height was about ten feet tall.....”

“....I’ll write six feet tall.”

The officer replied on his own initiative and wrote this in a notebook.

“Yes yes, he also wielded a staff.”

“The murder weapon was a cane.”

“He also used magic to lift and throw stones.”

“.....He threw stones.”

He shut his notebook; it must be because he felt that continuing with Edgar’s nonsense any longer was not appropriate.

It was all true, Edgar could not help but smile. However, if he didn’t obtain the title of Earl of Ibrazel and didn’t meet Lydia, he wouldn’t have believed in things like fairies and magic.

At any rate, as long as the constable made it appear as if the report was completed, then unnecessary suspicions could be erased.

“Earl, recently among the police, the belief that nobles should not be given special treatment have increased. Please do not duel in private.”

Constable Gordon got up from the chair after having said that.

As a matter of course, private duels were illegal. But for those belonging to aristocracy, it was taboo to report and consider dueling to protect one’s honor as a crime. Regardless of the parties dueling, witnesses or those around them, it was impossible for a duel to leak out.

However, why was the police so keen?

“By the way, officer, did someone suspect my injuries to be from dueling?”

The police officer turned his head and looked at Edgar who was sitting on a chair.

“No, but we have received reports of strange incidents, things like being suddenly receiving a request to duel, and if they didn’t agree, then there would be unilateral violence. But this was merely a rumor, because regardless of whether nobles faced trouble or were injured, as long as it was associated with dueling, they believe that it would be shameful to speak about these matters.”

“You think that if it was me, I would speak about it?”

“No, I think if you were to encounter this kind of man, regardless of whether it was a duel or some other formality, it would be impossible for them to reoccur. If that’s the case, then I think it should be good news for London’s public security.”

“Unfortunately, I think that strange incident will definitely happen again.”

The officer nodded and sighed, and then put on his hat.

“I will take my leave, please take care of yourself.”

“If I meet that guy, could I make him unable to reappear?”

"Earl, that's a crime."

He warned Edgar with a serious expression, then went on to say:

"If anything happens, please discuss it with me at any time."

*

Lydia arrived at the Earl's mansion and just happened to brush past a man with an orderly beard, then entered the main entrance hall.

"Miss Lydia, Lord Edgar has been waiting for you for a long time."

The person who said this and came to greet her was Raven.

This exotic young man with brown skin was Edgar's attendant, and although he had a baby face which appeared to be only fifteen years old, he was actually older than Lydia.

"Oh, Raven, I've lost something, I was going to go to the study and see if I left it there before I go and see Edgar."

"What are you looking for? I'll come and help you."

Raven was loyal to Edgar no matter what happened, as long as it was for his master, he would even disregard his own safety. Although his heart was previously only open to Edgar, he had recently begun to care about Lydia.

He seemed to consider Lydia as his master's fiancée, who was an existence close to him.

Because of Raven's unusual background, his master's command was everything to him, but he was now beginning to have his own emotions and will. Lydia was happy about this, but although Raven was an attendant she was familiar with, she didn't want to ask a male attendant for help, so she began to vaguely say:

"No need, I should be able to find it quickly, you can let Edgar know."

"Lord Edgar is in your study."

What!

Flustered, Lydia broke into a run.

Lydia was a fairy doctor. The title that Edgar possessed, Earl of Ibrazel, was not a fabricated name, it derived from a mysterious island located somewhere. The fairies living in England had also accepted Edgar as the Lord of Ibrazel.

Because there were many fairy inhabitants in England and several other territories, Lydia's job was to find ways for the fairies and humans to coexist everyday.

Lydia was a fairy doctor consultant, so she had a workroom in this mansion, but Edgar was in a position to know all about her work, so even if he casually picked something from the table, it was something to be expected.

However, Lydia ran into the room and shouted:

"Edgar, what are you doing!"

"Hi Lydia, I've missed you."

As expected, he was sitting on the chair at the table, holding Lydia's personal belonging that she forgot to take with her.

“Y-you, don’t just look at my things as you please!”

Although it was just a thin magazine, Lydia was anxious to get it back. He cleverly evaded Lydia’s outstretched hand and stood up. Lydia desperately wanted to snatch it back, but in result she was embraced and could not move.

“You ran here so urgently, was it because you were thinking of me too?”

One of his hands embraced Lydia’s waist, while the other hand hid her magazine behind his back, and he snickered.

“Gi--give it back to me.”

“If you kiss me, I can give it back to you.”

“Wha...”

Lydia didn’t know when the time was right, so she could only blush and freeze. Perhaps he couldn’t wait any longer as he finally took the initiative to gently kiss Lydia.

He then pressed his cheek close to her hair in amusement.

“Hey...”

“Your hair also smells of chamomile.”

“I... didn’t rub anything on”

“Then it was the fairies’ doing, look, there are petals.”

He blew the white petals in his palm in the air, and the petals floated into the air.

After gently letting go of Lydia, he walked to the window and still didn't return the magazine.

"The French fashion plate* isn't bad, how gorgeous."

"It... seems like the fairies picked it up."

Lydia had many fairy friends, and in the house she lived with her father or Edgar's mansion, there were many large goblins and such, fairies. Lydia was already very familiar with them now, and occasionally, they would put useless things in her room.

That was the case for the magazine as well, the fairies had probably picked it up from somewhere. But Lydia was attracted to the gorgeous images, so she didn't throw it away.

"Is there a design that you like?"

"Th--those designs won't be popular in England no matter which one it is anyway."

The magazine was seen by Edgar, making Lydia feel embarrassed as she could only turn away. This was because the magazine featured a special collection of pajamas.

As far as common sense is concerned, pajamas were not allowed to be seen by others, this kind of clothing was like underwear, where as long as one spoke openly about it, they would be humiliated. But pajamas in France were dresses adorned with ribbons or embroidery, and was openly published in the magazine.

With Edgar knowing that she went as far as to look at these sort of things, Lydia felt extremely embarrassed.

“Do you like this one? Hmm, I do think it’s very cute.”

Because it really was too beautiful, Lydia folded the corners of the magazine page. Edgar was turning to that page, causing blood to rush to her head even more.

“Don’t make fun of me!”

“I’m not making fun of you. I don’t know why, but the women of this country try to dress simply in front of their husbands, rather than that, I feel that when the two of us are alone, I’d like to see you dressed gorgeously even more.”

“Do you think I’d wear that kind of thing?”

“Then do you want to sleep naked?”

“!.....Don’t be ridiculous! A decent lady will not dress up in pajamas!”

She managed to take the magazine back from Edgar and then hid it behind her.

Lydia was clearly embarrassed and at a complete loss, Edgar felt it was amusing and so he chuckled.

“Isn’t that all the more wonderful? No one will be able to imagine you like that, only I will know.”

“Don’t imagine it!”

“It’s fine isn’t it? We’re getting married.”

Yes, they were going to get married soon.

The wedding dress had been decided, the dowry and clothes were ready.

However, something was currently troubling Lydia.

The other day, she tried sewing the ribbons by hand onto her new pajamas and underwear, and just when she had finished, the housekeeper was surprised and stopped her.

“Miss, sewing decorations on underwear is preposterous.”

Having said that it was preposterous, Lydia stopped in surprise.

“Sewing a little bit of decorations is alright, isn’t it? By decorating the hem and the sleeves with ribbons, it’ll be cute if a small flower embroidery pattern was sewed on.”

“Spending time to decorate parts that are unseen is certainly not worthy of praise.”

I--is that so?

But from Lydia’s perspective, she had just finished decorating the pajama that was similar to the simple nightgowns she had been wearing since childhood and it was very unattractive.

As soon as she saw the French magazine, she yearned to wear those sorts of nightgowns.

“In any case, the parts that cannot be seen, with or without decorations, no

one will pay attention to it so it doesn't matter."

"The Earl will see it."

She pointed out what was making Lydia anxious.

However, Lydia had probably begun to pay attention already.

Even if it was family, her father hardly cared about Lydia wanting to embroider or sew ribbons onto her pajamas to this day.

However, it will attract Edgar's attention in future. This is why, having thought that, Lydia thought it was too plain to only sew up ribbons on pyjamas.

Her arms and legs were thin like a child's, wearing pajamas without the slightest of decorations was like hanging a bed sheet on her body, wouldn't this be the least bit ladylike?

However, the housekeeper seemed to be against decorating pajamas regardless.

"To be aware of another person being attracted by the sight of an undergarment makes a vulgar woman. It will be difficult if you were to be despised by your husband by the time you get married."

Would Edgar think that way?

She certainly didn't want to be despised. She also didn't want go through the trouble of looking like an innocent child, but she also didn't want to deliberately dress in clothes that weren't cute because of this.

What was she going to do?

Although Lydia, who was troubled, was willing to face marriage, she didn't know how Edgar sees her now, so she felt anxious.

If one truly had to differentiate, pajamas actually weren't considered to be an undergarment, so she thought that if the pajamas were a little more gorgeous, then she wouldn't be so shy.

But if this were the case, then would men regard women with contempt?

Would Edgar also think this way and be tired of her?

"Lydia?"

Edgar's voice felt very distant and Lydia's sight suddenly went dark.

Perhaps Lydia had forgotten to breathe because she was scatterbrained, she felt that she had lost consciousness.

"Miss Lydia, it's alright now, I've loosened the corset."

As soon as she opened her eyes, the Earl's housekeeper's round face was in front of her.

"Oh...Mrs. Harriet..."

"This is a common occurrence, young ladies who are soon to be married will tighten their corset too much."

Lydia was lying on the sofa in the study, inhaling slowly.

She seemed to have only fainted for a little while.

“Harriet, is Lydia awake?”

Edgar’s voice was outside the door.

“Yes, you don’t have to worry, please wait a little.”

Harriet helped Lydia stand up and quickly fastened the buttons behind her. When she opened the door, Edgar, who seemed to have waited for a long time, entered the room.

“My lord, deliberately custom-making the wedding dress too narrow around the waist is a bad trend.”

He listened to the housekeeper’s words and worriedly gazed at Lydia.

“Yes, alter the dress size.”

“No need, I’m just not used to it now, it won’t be uncomfortable by the wedding ceremony.”

But she only fainted from the corset being a little tight, Lydia felt embarrassed as she talked.

Hearing that aristocratic young ladies found this to be a natural thing, that having narrower waistlines in wedding dresses compared to ordinary dresses was extremely common, it was also said in the dress shop that it would be more beautiful this way.

As Lydia was marrying into the Earl's family, Duchess Masefield busily helped out a lot in all aspects, the custom-made dress shop was also introduced to her by the Duchess. Because this was a famous dressmaking shop, Lydia was hoping to have a dress decorated gorgeously like the ladies in nobility.

"You don't have to force yourself."

"If the bride is unrefined, will you be okay with that?"

"Listen Lydia, I'm not going to marry you with that dress. Moreover, you're not the least bit unrefined.

Even if the waistline isn't narrowed, you still seem very skinny."

It was because she was very skinny that her shoulders and arms had less womanly curves, and so the waistline had to be slightly thinner.

"If you don't want to get married in that dress, then I'll arrange it according to your liking."

Raven brought a glass of water into the room. Edgar took the cup and handed it to Lydia.

Then, he stroked Lydia's hair as if to appease her, and held her face with the palm of his hand.

Edgar was also wearing indoor clothing and had no gloves on; Lydia could feel the temperature of his skin directly, so she felt more shy than ever before.

"Well, it'll be made according to your liking, and you can sew as many ribbons

as you want on the places where only I can see.”

The magazine was still on the table. The cover of the magazine had many ribbons freely drawn on the pajamas.

“I--I definitely won't sew ribbons on!”

At the thought of the housekeeper and Raven having seen the magazine, Lydia blushed and almost fainted again.

*

If her mother was still alive, perhaps she wouldn't have behaved so embarrassingly.

Lydia had no female relatives whom she could easily consult with, nor did she have married female friends.

While people could tell her what to do to prepare for the wedding ceremony, no one could teach her about matters after marriage.

She couldn't discuss the matter of the pajamas with her father or Duchess Masefield, who helped her prepare for marriage, because there were too many concerns and she couldn't ask such a shameless question.

Lydia gazed at the new pajamas on the bed.

She tightened the cuffs slightly and had sewn some ribbons and embroidery; this was yesterday's matter.

Although it was discovered by the housekeeper, Mrs. Cooper, as long as she paid a little attention to it, the pajamas had become very cute as it looked a

little like indoor clothing.

Although it was still quite different compared to the luxury French pajamas, it would be more beautiful if there were lace decorations.

"But I can't wear these kinds of pajamas."

She had to restore the clothes back to its original state.

Edgar said the pajamas in the magazine were very cute and all, but did he really think so?

Lydia was surprised at her own lack of common sense, and she couldn't help but be dismayed at the thought that he might get shocked.

"Hey Lydia, why do you look so gloomy?"

A voice came from the window; Lydia hurriedly rolled the gown into a ball and pushed it underneath the bedsheet.

"Ke...Kelpie."

A figure suddenly appearing by the window side on the second floor was a fairy that was very close to Lydia.

Despite his black hair, fierce features and robust figure, he looked very attractive but his natural instincts were that of a horse. He was a magic kelpie who was feared and ate humans.

But for some reason, he really liked Lydia. Even if Lydia was currently engaged to Edgar, he will still appear from time to time, and it wasn't known whether it was to distract himself from boredom.

"No, I'm not feeling gloomy."

Lydia smiled and Kelpie came over and stared at her.

"That's good. If you don't want to marry that Earl, feel free to let me know."

Lydia thought that even if there were any careless complaints, the only person she couldn't speak to was this guy, who would make a fuss. If she spoke of her uneasiness regarding the marriage, things will get out of hand.

"Oh yeah, Lydia, did you like that book?"

"Book?"

"Last time, I put it here. It had lots of pictures of strange clothes."

It was the French magazine.

"Then you were the one who picked it up?"

"Yeah, I thought you'd like it because you always wear strange clothes."

Kelpie seemed to think that women's dresses nowadays looked very strange. Nevertheless, it seems that he was unable to distinguish between dresses and pajamas.

Lydia sighed.

Speaking of that, Lydia didn't have general knowledge of British undergarments either.

However, showing or chatting about it with others will be treated as having a lack of common sense, who did everyone learn that aspect of knowledge from?

They had probably learned from women close to them.

But her mother had passed away very early,

as well as her grandmother before Lydia became aware of the troubles and doubts that happen during the marriageable age. To make matters worse, her only friends were fairies, so she did not know of them until now.

For example, an unmarried woman cannot be alone with a man and so on; although the reasons for not doing it were explained quite vaguely, she was still taught this often. However, nobody told her that she couldn't decorate undergarments.

Perhaps this matter wasn't so serious, but it was precisely because of this that it became Lydia's blind spot.

"What, you don't like it?"

"No, that's not true, I just took a look and was very happy with it."

Lydia really did feel happy from just looking at it. She thought that since it's like this, she shouldn't be so shy in front of Edgar.

"Your face is really red, do you have a fever?"

Kelpie casually touched Lydia's forehead.

"I--I'm fine, there's nothing wrong."

It seemed he had read what she was thinking in mind, Lydia, who was too embarrassed by this, she moved back, and although the water fairy's hands were ice-cold it made her feel comfortable.

So she smiled at Kelpie.

"Thank you."

Kelpie revealed a soft expression, which was not usual at all.

"You haven't been so harsh recently."

"What do you mean harsh, was I so unfriendly before?"

Lydia said, thinking that perhaps it was because she did not have a peace of mind before. In the past, she was unable to believe in Edgar and she did not have self-confidence, so her heart was confused.

Now, although she had all kinds of worries regarding marriage, she no longer hesitated.

"You're very happy."

Kelpie narrowed his eyes and looked a little sad.

"Yo, I was wondering why there was a stinky kelpie smell, it turns out that you came again."

The sound came from the window. After the gray fairy cat squeezed into the window, he stood on the ground with his hind feet, but he was a little unsteady. His nose was bright red and he seemed a little drunk.

"What, it's a cat."

"I'm not a cat, I'm Nico-sama. Hey, don't sit on my chair."

Normally he would stay as far as possible from the ferocious Kelpie, but probably because he was drunk now, his attitude was very arrogant.

Kelpie stood up indifferently and sat down on the bed where Lydia was sitting.

"You're back, Nico. You're late today, dinner is already over."

"All good, I'm already full."

Nico probably went to a fairy banquet that was being held, as he happily stroked his fluffy tail.

Nico was Lydia's friend whom she had known the longest. It was also like this now around her, there were always fairies keeping her company.

Perhaps even when she marries Edgar, only this point won't change after becoming Countess. Lydia felt at ease as she thought this.

"Oh that's right, Lydia, I saw something very interesting today. There was an armored man riding a horse and galloping on Regent Street."

"Armor and helmet... you mean like the decorations in Edgar's mansion?"

"Yeah, it was a guy fully dressed in metal."

"Why would someone wear such a thing?"

But at that moment, Kelpie pointed at the door.

"Just like that guy?"

Lydia turned and gasped.

There was a man in silver armor standing there.

This unidentified man was wearing a helmet and breastplate, from his armor to his gauntlets, it was only natural that even his feet were completely covered in armor, as if he had run out from a medieval painting.

"Wh--who are you? Where did you come from!"

With the sound of clinking metal, the armored man began to move, approached Lydia, and suddenly knelt down on one knee.

"Princess, it's been awhile."

"What?"

"I truly intend to save you, so I've come here. I beg of you, believe me, will you come with me?"

Lydia carefully stared at him, trying to see his face inside the helmet clearly, but the inside seemed dark, so she couldn't see anything. She could only feel a powerful gaze within the depths of the armor, so she felt more confused rather than raising questions.

"Hey you, don't get close to Lydia!"

Kelpie stood up to intervene between the two. The armored man was startled and hastily withdrew.

"You're not human, are you?"

"I'm the noble Kelpie."

The man revealed a warning as he unsheathed the sword from his waist. It was medieval style, and appeared to be a very heavy sword. He used it to impede Kelpie, while continuing to talk to Lydia.

"Princess, please understand, the man who wants to become your husband is a greedy and cruel monster."

"I--I don't think it's that extreme....."

"You're not denying it."

Nico muttered.

"If you do not run away, something unfortunate will happen..."

“Disappear from me!”

Kelpie transformed into his horse form, then roared as he rushed to the armored man.

The man fell to the ground along with the armor, making a loud noise.

“Damn, that evil lord went as far as to send a monster to guard the princess.”

“Kelpie, don’t destroy the room!”

The man stood up as Lydia grabbed onto Kelpie.

However, as he saw Kelpie, who suddenly stood upright with his mane standing on its ends, as well as the twisted sword being stepped on, he seemed to think that didn’t have a chance.

He quickly picked up the sword and withdrew.

“Princess, I will not give up. I will definitely return and rescue you.”

“Don’t come anymore!”

“Please allow me to take your handkerchief as proof of the promise.”

The object that the man grabbed was a white cloth with thin ribbons sewn on it, peeking out from underneath the sheets.

“What, wait, that’s...!”

That’s not a handkerchief, it’s pajamas.

But Lydia could not stop him as the armored man jumped out the window.

“How troublesome, give it back!”

Kelpie grabbed onto the hem, but the pajamas made a ripping sound.

The man disappeared through the window along with the front end of the sleeve.

Wearing heavy armor and jumping out from the second floor window was practically suicide.

Lydia hurried over to the window and looked outside.

However, his figure could not be seen either on the street below or on the street ahead.

Only the sound of a horse galloping on the stones was echoing, like some kind of magic from somewhere.

“Hmph, he’s just all talk.”

“Was that guy human?”

Nico tilted his head in confusion.

(2)

Princess.

Someone was calling her.

Lydia looked around, but the darkness surrounded her, so she couldn’t see clearly. The faint light came in from an area that seemed to have been cut out in squares.

What was this place?

This place had stone walls and stone floors. After her eyes slowly adjusted, she discovered that the squares seemed to be windows, and the moon could be

seen rising.

Lydia went to the window. Although the shutters were open, the windows were fitted with panes and on the other end, the moonlight shining on a spire could be seen.

It looked like an ancient castle.

This must be a medieval castle.

The knight in armor seemed like he would appear at any time.

On that subject, the armored man addressed Lydia as 'Princess'.

Lydia thought that she was dreaming while pondering over this matter.

Princess. The voice came to her ear again.

She turned to see a figure in the bushes below.

It was a young man with shoulder-length hair, wearing a simple jacket, and a sword hanging at his waist.

He looked up desperately towards the window placed at about the height of the second floor.

He had clear spring water like eyes; Lydia felt that the man seemed to be very familiar to her.

(Don't, you'll be found.)

It was like watching a play, but it was actually herself saying these words.

(Princess, please be patient, I will definitely save you before the wedding tomorrow. When the time comes, would you like to come with me?)

(Yes, for sure.)

(Could you give me proof of our promise?)

Lydia put her hand in her chest, pulled out a handkerchief from her dress, and dropped it gently from the gap in the window.

He caught the handkerchief midair and pressed it to his lips.

The sound of footsteps came; someone was approaching this room. Lydia quickly whispered:

(Leave quickly.)

If he was discovered, he would definitely be killed.

The footsteps stopped in front of the wooden door.

The door creaked open, and Lydia nervously stared at the open door.

Although she only saw shadows, the person standing there must have been the lord who kept her there.

Even when she woke up, that strange dream still remained vivid in her memory.

Was it because the armored man gave an intense impression that she had such a dream?

Not only that, Lydia couldn't forget that the man had taken a corner of her pajamas all along, and so she was unable to clear up her depressed mood.

Edgar greeted Lydia with a cheerful smile that was completely opposite to her mood.

"Hi Lydia, I've waited for you for a long time."

The next day, when Lydia visited the Earl's mansion, for some reason, Edgar appeared before her in formal clothing.

"Edgar, you don't plan on going out, right?"

"Yeah, I've been waiting to go to the Theatre Royal and of course, you must come together with me."

After he spoke, he called the housekeeper, and Harriet brought an evening gown.

"But Edgar, your injury....."

"When the doctor came early this morning, I've already been able to go out, I could've been patient if you had stayed with me all day long, but I was almost dying of boredom."

If Edgar was left to rest regardless, he would be completely quiet, so Lydia visited the mansion everyday and intended to accompany him a little.

Indeed, she came later today, and Edgar seemed dissatisfied about this.

“This evening is the first day of the new opera performance, didn’t I say before that I wanted to go and see it?”

“Um, yes... but we don’t have to see it on the first day.”

“Today is a day when the powerful nobles gather, so it would be better to show up, or is it that you have something else planned?”

Lydia actually wanted to go find the armored man from yesterday.

He called Lydia ‘princess’. Lydia thought that he must have mistaken her for someone else, moreover, her pajamas had been taken away by a stranger; this was a matter she couldn’t ignore.

That sort of thing had ribbons sewn on, if someone saw it, what would she do? Once Lydia thought this, she became restless.

Standing from a fairy doctor’s viewpoint, she was also concerned about who the man actually was.

The unknown man wearing an armor and helmet was not surprised to see Kelpie, perhaps as Nico said, it couldn’t be determined as to whether or not he was human.

However, the iron-made armor seemed genuine, and she didn’t think that fairies would wear armor because they hated iron.

At any rate, the disguise ought to be very conspicuous, and now Nico and

Kelpie were searching throughout London separately.

“.....No, I didn’t have any other plans.....”

She was worried, and her mind was too preoccupied to watch the opera. But the embarrassing pajamas that she tried to decorate with a French style was snatched away, and she couldn’t explain this to Edgar.

“Then let’s get ready to head out. Today is mine and my fiancée’s long-awaited outing, you should dress beautifully.”

He smiled and kissed Lydia’s cheek, then left the room.

Lydia couldn’t do anything, as she could only exchange a glance with the housekeeper holding the dress.

Lydia dressed up, her hand was pulled by Edgar as they entered the crowd in the theatre. Although she was more or less accustomed to this situation, she would still feel nervous.

Moreover, the people's’ attention tonight concerned her.

Edgar hadn’t appeared in society for a long time so it was inevitable.

Lydia still couldn’t remember the names of the many ladies and gentlemen who came to greet Edgar, and so she greeted them while feeling puzzled.

Even after being led to the box seat to sit, more people had continuously come to greet them.

“Hey Edgar, have your glory wounds from protecting your fiancée healed?”

She originally thought that they would proceed to meet formally, but the one coming to the box to visit and using an ordinary manner was Edgar’s friend, it was a man whom Lydia had seen several times as well.

“Yeah, I have fully recovered. That’s because she took care of me well.”

“Miss Carlton, you were actually able to make this man concentrate on recovering, exactly what kind of magic did you use? If I get hurt, I might as well have you to take care of me.”

“Eh, magic...”

“Steven, haven’t you always said that you didn’t believe in magic?”

“That’s because I haven’t seen real magic. Whether it’s magic or the fairy country in your name, if those truly exist, then I would really like to see it. Miss Carlton, what do you think?”

“My apologies, I won’t lend Lydia’s magic to anyone.”

Oh dear. He shrugged.

“As usual, being so spoiled. Miss Carlton, if you think I am a more outstanding man than him, please do not do say it, otherwise I might lose my life.”

“Listen, Steven, even if Lydia made clear compliments, I wouldn’t be angry for every little thing.”

The two of them were lightheartedly joking, while they burst out laughing.

“By the way, Edgar, Lord Faulkner seemed to have been seriously wounded. I heard that he fought a man who snuck into his wife’s room and stole her handkerchief.”

“Oh, was it a formal fight?”

“That seemed to be the intention at first, because he could only duel in order to protect his wife’s reputation.”

“Duel?”

Lydia couldn’t help but cry out.

“They’d kill each other just over a handkerchief?”

“Lydia, duels don’t involve killing each other, it’s a gamble on life.”

In any case, it was a crime.

In order to appease Lydia’s frown, Edgar pulled her hand.

“Furthermore, from the beginning, if a lady gave the handkerchief to a man, it meant that she set her heart on the other person. In other words, it was equivalent to the person wanting to snatch his wife, and it would be impossible to forgive the person.”

“Yes, Miss, it is precisely because the nobility gamble for their life to fight for the sake of justice, and the injustice of the matter must be corrected.”

“Then if you lose, what will happen? It’s possible that they won’t be able to restore their reputation, and they’ll die in this way, isn’t that so?”

Edgar happily looked at Lydia who was wasting time thinking about something trivial and then said:

“For the sake of his wife’s reputation, risking his life is worthy of praise because he fought fairly as a man and as a noble.”

Lydia hadn’t known this. Was it necessary to fight for that sort of thing?

“...Then what about the person who stole the handkerchief?”

“I heard he went missing. Ultimately, they seemed to have quarreled about dueling, so there hadn’t been any formal showdowns.”

“Having said that, you’re injured simply from an ordinary fight.”

“Furthermore, there’s a very strange matter as well, according to Madame Faulkner’s claim, the man seemed to have misunderstood, I heard that he was looking for a red-haired woman. Ah that’s right, Miss Carlton, you also have red hair.”

He said, having noticed it.

“Edgar, you’d better be careful.”

“It’s alright, I won’t let anyone touch her.”

Edgar put his lips close to the wisp of hair on Lydia’s neck, and seemingly whispered vaguely, not knowing who he was whispering to.

Lydia felt his breath brush against the nape of her neck, and she couldn't help but blush. The reason why she was able to calm down was because she recalled that there was a more concerning matter than Edgar, who loved to joke around.

Red-haired woman, mistaking the wrong person?
It can't be..... right?

However, if the armored man from yesterday had mistaken Lydia's red hair for someone else's...

Speaking of that, he spoke of some handkerchief yesterday and took the linen pajamas away.

"Excuse me, Sir, do you know of the man's features?"

"What wrong Lydia? does this concern you?"

"N--no... it feels frightening somehow..."

"In that case, I'll stay by your side regardless of whether it is day or night."

Edgar seemed to be joking when he said that. Lydia took his hands that were holding her and put it back on his lap. Sir Steven smiled softly and then answered her question:

"It isn't too clear. Because his wife had done nothing wrong, so she shouldn't want unnecessary rumors spreading around, and the people related to that man are tight lipped regarding his name and features."

It would have been fine if she was just overthinking.

"Hey, Lydia."

At that moment, a voice came from the shadows of the curtain.

A gray tail seemed to be beckoning her. It was Nico.

Does he know something about the armored man?

"Excuse me for a moment."

Lydia immediately left her seat and quickly picked up Nico, who was in a passage, and held him in her arms. She thought that it would be troublesome if people saw her talking with a cat standing on two hind feet.

"Lydia, what are you doing? Put me down."

Nico didn't like being treated like a cat as his paws and feet were pushing Lydia.

"Bear with me, there's too many people here. Never mind that, do you know anything?"

"Yes, I found the guy."

"Where is he?"

"There."

Nico's finger pointed to the carpet spread out below the grand staircase.

There was a suit of armor standing near the entrance of the opera house where it was filled with people. The armored man had turned his neck to look around, so they were aware that it wasn't a decoration at all.

The crowd didn't mind the armored man, probably because they believed that it an actor of the opera troupe.

However, Lydia barely managed to suppress a scream. Tied to the man's upper arm was the white cloth decorated with ribbons, that was stolen from Lydia last night...

"Woah, don't just leave me behind!"

Lydia left Nico, rushed down the stairs and ran to the armored man.

"Ohhh, Princess you are indeed here. Tonight, there were a lot of high class carriages gathered within the vicinity of this building, I thought that you ought to be inside, so I came."

"Um, I have something to tell you."

Lydia was mindful of the crowd as she brought the man to a dark area by the corner of the curtains. If Edgar discovered this, there was no telling what would happen.

"Have you made up your mind to not get married?"

"Can you give that back to me first?"

Lydia reached towards the thing tied to the man's arm, but immediately he withdrew.

"I can't give it back to you."

"It's not a handkerchief."

"I can see that."

Had he looked at it properly? Although Lydia was angry, she was also embarrassed. Nevertheless she still tried to refute, but the man once again said:

"No matter what it is, it's all the same as long as it's an item belonging to the Princess. This is proof that you trust me."

"Trust? That was what you stole, furthermore, I'm not a princess, you mistook me for someone else."

"No, you are the princess, the reincarnation of my princess."

"Reincarnated?"

The armor nodded, as if it was a matter of course.

"You were a noble princess in the past, and I was the one who served you. Nevertheless, we were attracted to each other and later on promised to spend a lifetime together."

He touched the ribbons tied on his arm, as if he were reminiscing.

"But the wicked lord had taken a fancy toward my lover and took her away to be his bride."

Lydia couldn't help but ask.

"When did that happen?"

"For me, it was a year ago. But when I returned to this land, it had already been centuries."

"Hey Lydia, that guy wouldn't have returned here from the fairy realm to the human world here, right?"

Nico said, pointing that out.

The way time was measured in the fairy realm was different to the human world. Originally, it would be believed that only one month had passed, however in human world terms, it had been several years, or a few decades.

The amount of time he spent would have been a few days in the fairy realm after having returned. This sort of thing was quite common.

The armored man was not surprised at all to see Kelpie, and even if the cat spoke to him, he also nodded as if he understood.

“The fairy realm... that should be it. The lord who loathed me borrowed the power of a witch. The witch transformed into a beautiful woman and enticed me, and trapped me in the woods. Although after the witch had died, I barely managed to escape from the forest, the human world had already changed completely...”

“In that case, you can no longer live in the human world.”

Humans who have stayed in the fairy realm long term, would not be able to touch the objects of this world, even if they had returned from the fairy realm. If they came in contact with them, they would turn into dust.

“I am wearing a magic defense made from deerskin now, and everything is covered by the armor, so it’s impossible to come in contact with the things of this world.”

“But, do you intend to dress like this for your whole life?”

Nico pitied him a little.

“I still have hope. As long as I find the princess and win against the demonic lord, then I can become human again, this was written in the witch’s magic book.”

An intense gaze from the depths of the helmet was staring at Lydia. Although Lydia couldn't see his eyes, she felt that they were blue.

The dream she saw was resurfacing.

The young man who was calling the princess had blue eyes.

Could it be from my previous life?

She felt dizzy. The noisy hall on the other side of the curtain seemed like it was another world.

"So princess, I will absolutely rescue you from the hands of that vile lord."

Do I know this person?

The person I truly should get married to is.....

"Lydia, you don't look so good."

Nico's voice was in her ear, which suddenly made her come back to her senses.

What previous life? It was just a dream. After rethinking, Lydia took a deep breath.

This situation was getting increasingly complicated. If this sort of matter were to reach Edgar's ears...

"Lydia, it's about to begin."

Lydia was frightened as her shoulders shook and looked back in panic.

Although the dreams of her past life diminished from her mind all at once, her face grew pale.

“E--Edgar!”

Edgar pushed aside the curtains and came over.

“Were you here to have a private conversation with Nico?”

He looked at Nico and Lydia, and perhaps thought that the armor was a decoration.

“Let’s go.” He embraced Lydia’s waist.

This time, the armor made a sound.

“Are you the sinister lord? Don’t take away my princess!”

Edgar looked at the armor.

“Edgar, let’s go.”

This was bad. Lydia pulled Edgar’s hand, but feeling dubious, he turned to the man and frowned.

“Lydia, were you thinking of some joke to surprise me?”

“Um, th-that’s not the case...”

“This isn’t a joke, I came back to defeat you.”

“Defeat? Me?”

“She is my lover.”

This sentence made Edgar fall silent, but he was clearly furious. Revealing a smile with a hidden meaning, he said:

“You’d better watch what you say, that armor cannot guarantee your safety.”

“No, Edgar, this person was detained in the fairy realm in the past...”

However, in the armored man's eyes, there was only the person that he firmly believed to be the hateful lord.

"You are a noble regardless, so you shouldn't be a coward and escape a one-on-one battle."

"In other words, you knew she was my fiancée, and yet you try to challenge me to a duel?"

"I don't have anything to do with this."

Nico immediately disappeared after he said that.

"Nico, wait, ahh really, Edgar hear me out."

"I am Sir William. I've come to duel you, you bastard."

Edgar snorted.

"Lydia is a chaste woman who loves only me, I do not have the time to deal with someone who is challenging me for a duel with a false accusation."

It wasn't long after Lydia somewhat relaxed when the armored man untied the white cloth on his arm.

She shrieked and her face went pale.

"Hey! Don't do that, give it back to me! That's not proof of a promise, you had clearly taken it yourself!"

Although it was a ripped sleeve, Edgar must have recognized what that light object was, and she saw that his expression grew quite severe.

"So that's how it is, I cannot ignore this."

“Then do you agree to duel?”

“No, you can’t duel!”

Although Lydia called out again, the crowd appeared to have started gathering on the other side of the curtain.

She didn’t want people seeing the corner of a pajama with ribbon decorations.

Lydia anxiously pushed the armored man into the passage.

“Hurry up and go! If you show that to others, I will hate you!”

“Princess...

“Do as I say!”

The armored man was probably overwhelmed by Lydia’s imposing manner and hesitantly retreated backwards.

“We’ll discuss the details after. You can come whenever, I am Lord Ashenbert.”

Edgar hugged Lydia’s shoulders and calmly left the scene. He paid no attention to the area where many people had gathered and quickly brought her back to their seats.

Part 2

(3)

"Hey Lydia, wake up, it's already morning."

Nico's tail was brushing against Lydia, causing her to suddenly open her eyes.

It was a dream. She let out a sigh. Nevertheless, her forehead was still sweating and her heart had not yet recovered.

"Did you have a nightmare? Your face looks pale."

"Um...yes."

"I'll go get breakfast first. The Professor has already left, so if you want to go downstairs, dress up properly, Raven is there."

Raven?

Now that he mentioned it, that was how it was.

Edgar thought that it would be bad if the armored man came again, so he left Raven here when he returned last night.

Even if her father and housekeeper were confused, Raven ought to have been standing at the bottom of the staircase leading to Lydia's room all last night. Although Lydia told him that he could rest in the parlor, he shouldered Edgar's orders, and probably hadn't even closed his eyes.

After Lydia watched Nico leave the room, she got up from her bed.

She opened her wardrobe and sighed.

She dreamed of the captured princess again.

This time, she was planning to escape the castle with the young man.

But no matter how they escaped, they could not shake off their approaching pursuers. She was caught at last, and was forcibly separated from the young man.

Lydia, or perhaps it was the princess, helplessly watched as the young man was cut down.

Was the man who kicked her beloved person and headed towards her that sinister lord?

Lydia, who was absorbed in the dream, took out a hidden dagger from her dress and pointed it towards the lord.

She dashed over to him as if wanting an embrace. The lord had extended his arms and embraced her, letting his guard down. Perhaps he felt that he had saved her from the hands of the intruder.

At that moment, she glimpsed at the face of the lord under the moonlight.

Lydia was flabbergasted.

Edgar. Just as she whispered that, she woke up.

Lydia felt a chill and held her trembling shoulders.

The reason why she had that sort of thing in the dream was because the armored man considered Edgar as the lord. It was solely due to the similarities that she overlapped Edgar with the lord.

However, she always felt very uneasy. She felt anxious in her innermost heart of making a mistake in the engagement, and she felt guilt from the dream that

was confusing her; she felt pained by these two emotions.

In the end, what on earth was going on?

She shook her head, trying to shake off the remnants of the dream out of her mind. Although she quickly changed into her ordinary clothes, she was unable to calm down before she went over to the dining room, so she sat on her dresser chair.

Was it really necessary to duel?

As long as Lydia thought of this matter, the armored man's appearance would become that of the young man from the dream. Lydia only had a good impression of him, in being gentle and sincere.

That man might be killed by Edgar.

Just like the dream she saw.

No, compared to him, Edgar is more...

The person I am most worried about is clearly only Edgar.

She felt dizzy again.

"Miss Lydia, are you alright?"

She looked up immediately and saw Raven standing by the door.

"I'm sorry, you didn't respond when I knocked on the door, so I just came in out of my own accord."

".....That's okay, I was just thinking about something."

Although Lydia said that, she looked away from Raven.

She was engaged to Edgar, and yet she was thinking about someone else. The indescribable emotions she felt in her heart seemed that it could be seen through, so she was afraid.

Lydia should be angry at the armored man who disrupted her smooth everyday life, but she did not know if she ought to be angry, and so she grew more and more anxious.

"Let's go downstairs."

She tried to force this sentence out and walked out of the room.

When Lydia went downstairs to the dining room, Nico, who was stuffing himself with pancakes looked at her.

"You don't look too good, you don't have an appetite? "

"Uh, yes."

"Then give me your pancakes."

Nico was not worried at all. While he ate a mouthful of pancakes, he eyed Lydia's pancakes.

Lydia who was silent, pushed her plate towards Nico.

"Oh, thank you."

Lydia sat down on a chair and watched Raven. He was standing by the dining room entrance and did not slack off at all in guarding Lydia.

"Raven, do you want to sit down?"

She called out to Raven.

"No, because I do not know when the despicable man who stole Miss Lydia's undergarment will appear."

But his face was serious as he gave a firm answer.

.....It's not an undergarment.

While Lydia wanted to correct him, it was quite humiliating to say that in front of men, so she could only blush and shut her mouth.

"It really isn't normal, going as far as to fight over that piece of ripped cloth."

Nico wiped the corners of his mouth with a napkin.

"It was because Lydia sewed things like ribbons and embroidery on top that he mistook it as a handkerchief, and if it wasn't for him being driven away by Kelpie, that guy probably wouldn't have taken anything away."

"Y--you didn't have to mention that matter again....."

She drank the housekeeper's milk tea in dismay.

"All in all, dueling is really strange. Hey Raven, you think this kind of thing is silly too, right?"

He nodded in agreement after thinking about it.

"Yes, I believe that whether or not there are ribbons on it, after taking it off, it is all the same."

"Eh...What are you saying...."

What? Taking it off.....?

At Raven's unexpected answer, Lydia was speechless and froze in place.

This wasn't what I was asking.

"Raven, the focus wasn't on the ribbons."

Nico intervened, helping her speak.

"Then, is it the embroidery?"

"Oh my, won't you make Lydia more embarrassed like this?"

Seeing Lydia holding her cup and frozen, Raven seemed to discover that he had to pay attention to Lydia's feelings.

Although his face was expressionless, his tone became a little anxious.

"Um, about that, Miss Lydia you do not need to worry about it, Lord Edgar likes both the ribbon and embroidery."

"You don't have to say any more."

Hearing Nico speak with a cold tone, Raven lowered his head.

Regardless of whether it was the lace, embroidery or perhaps what happened with the armored man, it was all because Lydia was childish and unaware of the affairs of life.

She was about to get married so this was absolutely unacceptable.

I have to come to my senses.

Lydia chose Edgar, she couldn't cease to be faithful, moreover, the princess

was not her.

She said this to herself while taking a deep breath, trying to calm down as much as possible.

Now is not the time to panic over pajamas.

“Raven, um, there’s no need for you to mind this, rather, is Edgar home?”

At any rate, I have to stop the duel.

Then, she needed to find a way to eliminate the feelings of not knowing who she is.

As long as she stood by Edgar’s side, she could definitely forget the dream.

I have to go and see him.

Lydia was very short-tempered as she thought this.

When Lydia arrived at Earl Ashenbert’s mansion and entered the lobby of the main entrance, a woman running down the stairs brushed past her.

The young woman appeared to be crying, but she just lowered her head and rushed out. Lydia saw a maid chasing behind in a hurry to leave. She couldn’t help but hate her own poor timing, and she also felt more anxious.

Her emotions seemed to be more chaotic than usual, why would she still encounter such a thing?

Since being engaged, she had often encountered such scenes. Because they suffered a blow from Edgar’s engagement, there seemed to be many women

who came to question him or cry out.

For the time being, regardless of whether it was a while after the engagement was announced, things should have already settled down.

"Welcome, Miss Lydia."

The head butler Tomkins greeted Lydia with a subtle smile.

"Please don't worry about it. That lady had returned from a long trip, so she had just found about Master's engagement."

Since they knew that they would be driven away afterwards, it meant that things weren't as simple as maidens being secretly in love.

Lydia sighed.

Recently, she had been able to display the behavior of a lover around Edgar, and even had the feeling of wanting to see him, furthermore, she began to become conscientious, and believed that even so, she would be welcomed here.

But when faced with this kind of thing, Lydia couldn't help but flinch, and she would lose a lot of confidence standing by Edgar's side.

"Master is in the library. Raven, bring Miss Lydia there."

Raven had returned to the mansion with Lydia; heard what Tomkins said and nodded, but Lydia immediately shook her head.

“No need, I want to go to the study room for a while...”

“Lydia, let’s talk before that.”

Edgar appeared at the top of the staircase.

“I’m not familiar with that woman from just now, I really wanted to say this, I only escorted her to a party within the context of social etiquette.”

He helped Lydia sit on a chair, while he explained and stood to justify himself.

“But she appeared to be crying.”

“She probably wanted to check whether or not I really am engaged. Although I was a little surprised, I don’t remember doing anything to upset her.”

“Even so, you must have sweet talked her suggesting that you looked forward to her every embrace. So she must have been badly hurt.”

“I don’t know if she was looking forward to it, but I have not betrayed you, neither have I done anything to make you angry.”

“It’s hard to say, I’ve also seen girls that have almost cried in front of you, could it be that they were all those who you took the initiative to be friendly to?”

Even if Lydia was unaware of the affairs of life, she at least knew that this was impossible.

“Well, that kind of momentary romance.... I won’t say I haven’t talked about that, but even with you, I promised to discuss the future with you and now you are refusing to forgive past relationships?”

Although Edgar said this, what if other women did not see it as the end?

Perhaps there was currently still someone who loved him in secret. When meeting with these kinds of people again, wouldn't Edgar recall his former feelings?

Lydia was inexperienced in this so it was unclear.

The princess in the dream resurfaced in her mind.

Even if there was someone who remembered the princess now, would the princess have thoughts about this?

Would she have thought that it was all in the past?

Lydia did not think so. She felt that the princess would think of past matters, and would want to return to her lover's side.

Lydia quickly dispersed this imagination.

Just by imagining past romantic relationships, she felt a wave of guilt towards Edgar, her heart was feeling very apologetic.

However, he was different.

Thinking this, Lydia felt upset.

"Well, what about you?"

Lydia lowered her head and said gently:

"Even if I see my former lover again, would you not care since it was in the past as well?"

Edgar frowned in surprise, but it was only for a moment as he flatly and immediately said:

"I am your only lover. That was the case and will always be the case."

Indeed, Edgar was the first person who had a favorable impression of Lydia. But the tone of his voice was so conceited that it made Lydia very angry.

It was as if Lydia was an unpopular girl! This was indeed true, however....

"How...how would you know? These things happened before we met."

He stood beside her and put his hand on his chin in contemplation. Then, he suddenly had a grim expression, and stood in front of Lydia as if to intimidate her.

"Could it be that there were other men who have stolen your heart in the past? What kind of men? When and where did you meet?"

He clearly told Lydia to not be jealous of the past relationships that he spoke of, but now he was interrogating her in such a manner, it was indeed unfathomable.

"Lydia, we're going to get married so there's no need to hide things from each other."

Aren't you the one hiding a lot of things from me!

However, when Edgar bent down and held Lydia's hands, he had never looked at Lydia so confidently, she also began to feel that her impulses were a little stupid.

"Oh, how could there be that sort of person? I just don't want you to demand a duel just because..... something mistaken as a handkerchief was stolen."

He loosened his hands in astonishment and ingeniously connected the two matters together.

"Could it be that man? He was unable to save you, so he appeared?"

"Ah! N--no! The man was captured by the fairies, and after returning to the human world, he discovered that several hundred years have passed. If it continues like this, as long as he touches the things of the world, his body will turn to ash. It's just that he believes that if he were to take revenge for the defeat of his former lover being taken away, he will be able to turn back into a human...."

"Former enemy? He died several hundred years ago, no?"

"Yes, but he thinks there's such thing as reincarnation... he firmly believed that I was his past lover out of his own accord."

"What did you say? Past lover? You heard him say that, and so you believe it?"

He fretfully said aloud.

"I don't think so, I just don't know.... I feel a little confused."

So she really wanted to see Edgar. She thought that as long as she stayed Edgar's side, her confused heart would fade away.

However, he was angry at Lydia's attitude.
She clearly did not want to argue about this.

"Then, the person that was forcing you to separate from that man was the past me?"

"I didn't mean..."

"What if it was really like that? Would you pray for that man to win?"

"What I mean is that you mustn't duel."

He suddenly pulled Lydia's hand. Lydia could only stand up and was hugged by him.

"Edgar..."

"I won't stop, the location and date appointed by him has already come."

How could this be?

"Fate will determine who your true lover is. From the past to the present, we all believe that duels were left to God to decide the outcome, it was the most proper judgment."

Lydia would choose Edgar, so there wasn't a need for someone else to decide.

She obviously thought that, but she couldn't say it.

She was afraid and unable to move. She was afraid that the knife, which the princess of the dream pointed towards Edgar, no, the lord, would appear in her own hand.

Her hands were trembling, unable to wrap her arms around Edgar's back, so Edgar was probably thinking that Lydia wasn't accepting him.

He loosened his hands gently and let go of Lydia.

"The reason why I concluded that those relationships were of the past, was because I knew that even if I met with them, my feelings wouldn't sway, but for you, would you be moved if you saw him..... even if it was a past lover who you'd never seen before?"

Although Lydia wanted to speak, her voice did not come out. Edgar painfully sighed at her.

"Your wish is for that man to win, to not turn into ash and live a normal life? In that case, you could return to his side. If it makes you happy, it's an ordinary life that is merely comfortable."

Lydia stood trembling in place, and Edgar left her as he went out of the room.

*

"Lord Edgar, Miss Lydia has returned home."

Edgar was sitting in his armchair angrily when Raven came to the study and did not approach him as he stood at the door and spoke to him.

"Raven, things have become troublesome."

Hearing Edgar's mumbles, the expressionless attendant tilted his head

slightly.

“I said a massive lie. No, as long as it is for Lydia, I will truly do anything, but how could I hand her over to other men?”

Even if Lydia hoped so, no, if a man who Lydia was more attracted to appeared, Edgar could only think of sending that guy to hell.

“And yet, I told Lydia to go to his side.”

He clenched his fists.

“If she’s really gone, what am I going to do?”

Edgar tried to show his weak side a little, but Raven did not sympathize with him.

“Well.... I think there’s nothing you can do.”

“Don’t joke around, I won’t let her go no matter what!Having said that, if I humiliate the man that she sympathizes with, the impression that I give her will seemingly worsen.”

Sympathy? It would be nice if that was the case.

Lydia was particularly eager to stop the duel.

Edgar thought over this matter, but he didn’t expect that it was merely because he might die from the duel, as he thought that Lydia was worried about the opponent.

Having mentioned that, Lydia will not fall in love with a man so easily; even Edgar put a lot of effort in trying to make her love him.

However, having a favourable impression of the armored man, whose

appearance cannot be seen and whom she had met for the first time, was this possible?

It was very unusual, he thought. However, he wasn't very clear about something regarding Lydia.

Was she merely immersed in things like reincarnation, destined love and such affairs?

"Lord Edgar, even if it makes Miss Lydia upset, are you still going to duel?"

Raven wouldn't be disturbed by trivial things, but he was very afraid that Lydia would be displeased. Perhaps for him, to make an upset woman happy was harder than single-handedly beating up dozens of people.

"If I don't duel, the problem will worsen. The man seemed to have come from the fairy realm, he also spoke of reincarnation and such and pursued Lydia. If he gambled on the matter of whether or not he could become human again as a duel, then he shouldn't merely be a ribbon thief. The situation seems to be more complicated."

"He is wearing armor, so guns are useless."

Edgar nodded while thinking.

Recent duels will often use guns, but that man probably won't use weapons that he's never seen before.

Moreover, if that man truly returned from the fairy realm as Lydia said, then he probably won't agree to take off his armor.

Duels were carried out in a mutually agreed manner. What weapons to use, what conditions are allowed by one another in achieving fairness, these were the issues. But in Edgar's view, that type of defense equipment would only make him unable to move freely, but even so, everything really wasn't in his favor.

Was there any way to win?

"Do you intend to kill him?"

Edgar thought that if he depended on Raven's skill, perhaps there was a possibility to sever the carotid artery through the small cracks in the armor, but this wasn't the perfect choice.

If he were to just make that man disappear from the world, the bad rumors about him pursuing Lydia will still remain, which was troublesome. Not only that, if Lydia knew that it might be under Edgar's hands, she would be more sympathetic towards the man, and he did not want that.

Because of this, Edgar believed that a fair duel was the best solution. Even if duels were illegal, one-on-one duels followed the spirit of chivalry nevertheless. This will not only preserve her reputation, she would only be able to accept the outcome as well.

"Raven, this fight is for Lydia, therefore I cannot do despicable things. Carrying out fair competition is the proud tradition of aristocrats."

Nevertheless, Edgar also thought that getting killed for the sake of reputations was foolish. He naturally understood the aesthetics of nobility, but he had to recklessly fight in order to survive in the past, and these experiences had made him not just any pure aristocrat.

Edgar actually didn't hate doing despicable things, for him, what was more important was him not giving a despicable impression to others and nothing more.

"Ohh, I really wished she hoped for me to win instead of stopping me."

If that was the case, he felt that Lydia would understand him no matter what he did.

Edgar stood up while thinking.

"Sir William's letter was sent this morning, the witness must be decided at once. Call Tomkins here."

Raven nodded solemnly.

"Do you need me to protect Miss Lydia for the time being?"

After considering it a little, Edgar shook his head.

"There's no need today, I think Lydia won't like it."

(4)

Perhaps Edgar hates me.

Thinking this, Lydia was sad as she bit her lips in front of her dresser.

She held back tears while she brushed her hair to distract herself. But while brushing her hair, she couldn't help but think about it.

It was only natural that Edgar was angry. Clearly they were already engaged,

but being called a lover by another man and nearly wavering, this should have been an unforgivable betrayal for him.

No, my heart has not changed. The only person I love is Edgar.

I'm just feeling a little confused.

However, she couldn't smoothly convey her own feelings, and she felt that Edgar seemed to have been very hurt as a result.

If it was the previous Edgar, he wouldn't have told her to go to the armored man's side. He would have urged her to stay.

However, Lydia's feelings were not fixed, she blindly wished that he won't let her go, which was too selfish.

She couldn't even prevent Edgar from going to a duel, what was she going to do?

"It's alright, he will save me soon."

Lydia suddenly heard a voice and was so shocked that the hand brushing her hair stopped.

Her own appearance was reflected in the mirror. Although she had a strange feeling, she felt that the sound came from the mirror, and yet it seemed to have emerged from her heart, but she had an intuition that it was what the princess said in the dream.

I'm waiting for that young man. This was what she said.

How strange, what's going on with me?

Lydia dropped her brush and her hand touched her chest.

"Edgar."

She tried to whisper. While her emotions calmed a little, she soon felt a burst of confusion.

She went first full of confidence, but now she wasn't sure whether Edgar was the only one.

Reflected in the mirror was her face full of tears, when she thought that, she felt the princess' words again.

"For that man, it's the same as getting married to anyone, he just wants to make girls who resist him obey him, nothing more."

Lydia began to panic and slapped the mirror.

"That's not Edgar, he's not that kind of person! He wants to protect me....."

Yes, this matter originally wasn't serious enough to require a duel as a solution. If the problem lied merely with the pajamas, perhaps Edgar would have calmed down.

However, since the armored man claimed Lydia to be his lover, Edgar certainly wouldn't back down.

Edgar said without hesitation that he was in love with Lydia. Recently, Lydia felt his sincerity as it wasn't merely lip service.

In order to make Lydia a relative of the Earl household as for her to have a place where she belongs, he couldn't act carelessly.

If at this sort of time, his fiancée's past lover appeared, even if it was idle gossip, it would harm Lydia, whose status was originally lower, therefore he believed that he must use the form of a duel to strongly negate it.....

After Lydia pondered on this, she realized something.

That is, since she decided to marry a noble, then she shouldn't stop the duel, rather she should wish for Edgar's victory.

Being concerned over her fiancé's health or finding a way to reconcile are things to be dealt with after the duel.

However, Lydia's calm was disrupted by the voice of the princess from the dream.

"If it weren't for that lord...."

"Don't say anymore, being unable to stop the duel is your fault!"

(Duel? The Blue Knight Earl is going to duel?)

This time, a voice came from around Lydia's feet.

This wasn't an illusion, it was a loud and rough voice.

Just as she thought that, coming out of a drilled hole from a section of the floor was a small fairy who wore a triangular hat.

(Ohh, daring to duel with our Blue Knight Earl, he truly is a reckless guy.)

After standing on the floor, he shook his shaggy beard as he puffed out his chest.

He was a mine goblin who had connections with the Ashenbert household. He was also very familiar with Lydia and was a fairy who had often appeared in her surroundings.

Lydia let out a sigh.

If she was alone, she didn't know how she would appear, but she was very grateful now that there was someone who had spoken.

"Coblynau, do you know anything about the duels of the past Blue Knight Earls?"

(I've heard ancestors say that the Earl was quite unyielding, and lightly hit the opponent with a spear, causing them to fall from the horse.)

"Spears? Spears were used to duel?"

(Of course, duels were on horseback, and spears were used to compete. If they don't possess unyielding courage to challenge them from the front, then they wouldn't win.)

Lydia had read this in a book, but this kind of horseback competition was from the medieval era.

Lydia wasn't without doubt, but because she didn't understand it very well, she believed Coblynau, who had been staying underground and whose views

remained in the medieval ages.

Having said that, the so-called nobility that continued on from the medieval era and did not cease in history, had stretched down to the family and the system. Lydia thought to herself that since betting on the reputation of the duel, even now there were people consenting tacitly, which meant that following and carrying out the ways of orthodox competition weren't unreasonable.

But if that was the case, the armored man belonged to the era with genuine horse competitions, nobles in the current nineteenth century were accustomed to riding horses or using weapons, it wasn't like how people trained in the medieval times.

In that case, it was very unfavorable for Edgar...

"That sort of man being killed is only a matter of course."

Here we go again. Lydia frowned.

"Lydia, what happened? Do you have a stomachache?"

Another voice came. Kelpie forced his body through the narrow window and entered the room.

"Ugh, honestly, I'm really unlucky."

"Kelpie, what's going on? What happened?"

"I found that guy wearing armor. He was lying in middle of the plains, so I was going to swoop in and bite him, but that guy's body was too hard."

"That's to be expected, he's wearing armor."

Even for Kelpie, he was impossible to bite.

But Kelpie put his hands on his hips and looked down at Lydia, as if he wanted her to deny it.

Coblynau quickly got under the bed in order to dodge Kelpie.

"Come on, of course I know that iron is very strong, when I lunged at him at the time, he wasn't wearing hand protectors. I wanted to take the chance to bite his wrist at first, but it turned out that his old-looking gloves resisted my teeth."

"Gloves?"

"That guy is wearing durable leather, it's like his hands and feet are covered with powerful magic."

That's right, she remembered that he seemed to have said that he was wearing magic deerskin clothing.

Carefully thinking about it, depending solely on the armor can't cut off the effects of what several hundred years does to the body. Furthermore, the armor didn't cover the palms, as well as the soles of the feet. Ordinary leather boots should be incapable of withstanding the forces of erosion.

"He should be human, right? Where did he get those magical gloves and shoes from?"

(I've heard this before.)

Coblynau spoke from a distance.

(I know there are fairies that can create that sort of special leather boots and clothing. Similar to how we are very good at making fine mineral handicrafts, they are unparalleled leather smiths.)

“Could it be leprechauns?”

After Lydia said that, a voice came from the direction of the ceiling this time.

(That’s right, that guy stole our leprechaun boots, vest and gloves.)

A little fairy wearing a red hat poked his head out from a crack in the ceiling.

He jumped down, stood by Lydia’s feet and looked around. The fairy wore a leather apron and looked like a craftsman.

(I heard that you are a fairy doctor? Your partner said that you’ll help us, so he brought me over.)

“Is it Nico?”

“Yes, I was the one who found him. Lydia, I know the armored man’s true appearance!”

Nico jumped out from the window and proudly puffed out his chest in front of Lydia.

“His true appearance? What do you mean?”

(Wah! It’s a kelpie, a kelpie is here!)

The leprechaun suddenly realized that and jumped up, stuffed his head into the hole as if to flee, but because he was stuck, he kept twisting around. After Nico saw this, he laughed.

"Hahaha, you're really cowardly. If you are afraid of the kelpie, stand behind me."

(Ohh, you're not afraid of the kelpie? You are truly worthy of being a fairy doctor's partner.)

Kelpie, who looked fed up, deliberately picked up Nico.

"Hey cat, even if it's in front of Lydia, it's not that I can't taste your flavor."

"Kelpie, don't do that, I'd like to listen to the leprechaun speak."

"Hmph, I know, I'm not going to eat you guys."

After Kelpie threw Nico away, he sat on the bed where Coblynau was hidden.

Nico went to Lydia's side while pretending to be calm and straightening his crooked necktie or fur, then as if nothing happened, he stuck out his chest once more and said:

"Alright, leprechaun, tell Lydia about it."

The small fairy that dodged Kelpie, then came to Lydia's side again and nodded.

(The man was indeed a troublesome guy, a long time ago, he tricked the witch and obtained potions to control women's hearts.)

"Potions?"

(As long as the concoction is seeped into a woman's handkerchief or personal garment, she will be the man's past lover, and have a good impression of the man.)

No way.....

Lydia suddenly felt a burst of palpitations, and held her chest in result. She anxiously urged the fairy to continue.

"And then? What happened after?"

(He seems to use the potions on the ladies and enjoys himself as much as he likes. But one day, he saw a beautiful princess who was the lord's fiancée.)

"He took the princess's handkerchief....."

(He tried to steal her handkerchief but was caught as a result.)

In that case, he didn't make the princess change her heart?

Just because the armored man used magic to create those kinds of dreams on Lydia, she shouldn't have anything to do with the princess.

(Although the man was very cunning, he escaped using the maid's sympathy. He continued to flee to other countries, so the witch and Lord cooperated in order to trap in him the fairy realm, because she resented him very much.)

"That man said the witch died, so he was able to leave, but....."

(Yes, the witch is dead, after her magic weakened, the imprisoned man came out of the forest, but he had been unable to return to the human world with his body, so he stole our treasure, that is, those fine leather boots, vest, and

gloves.)

The leprechaun stopped there.

However, it was unknown whether it was because he recalled the thief and was furious, so he stood up as it was more than he could bear.

(We chased the stolen things to London, but because we couldn't find the thief, we've been so troubled. I heard you were being targeted by that man? In that case, will that man come again? Seize him, take back our stolen boots, vests and gloves!)

Lydia's held her troubled head.

She was actually deceived by the magic.

This was, of course, a big shock for her and didn't want to believe what the leprechaun said.

However, Lydia was a fairy doctor, so she knew that she couldn't be confused any more.

Fairies won't lie.

The armored man was definitely lying.

"Hey, you guys, having your stuff stolen is your own carelessness, don't create trouble for Lydia."

Kelpie said.

The leprechaun jolted in fright after being berated, and hurriedly ran to the corner of the room.

"It's alright, Kelpie, thanks to him I know the truth... However, I'm not sure if

I can get your things back... because the man cannot take off his boots."

(The Blue Knight Earl should be able to settle things with the evil man, right?)

Coblynau said.

"Oh right, Lydia, isn't this great? Wasn't the Earl planning to fight that guy?"

Even Nico said such a thing.

Since she knew she was being tricked, Lydia didn't want Edgar to be involved in danger even more.

Moreover, the man wore leprechaun leather, so it would be more difficult injuring him with ordinary weapons.

"But even if he were to duel, it's impossible that he'd take off his helmet and boots, we'll have to think of another way."

Lydia quickly pondered.

"Leprechaun, the man said that as long as he defeats the lord he hates in a duel, he can live in the human world, is this true?"

Lydia was crouching alongside the wall.

(Living in the human world? Is that a kind of magic? But who knows whether or not there is reincarnation in this world, oh, but that man has the book from the dead witch, he also stole our treasures, it appears that he deliberately risked entering the human world, so he should have a special purpose.)

Perhaps the armored man didn't really believe in reincarnation, but he still insisted on dueling.

She didn't know what he was actually trying to do. However, the magic that was advantageous to him must have been associated with dueling.

In that case, he will also continue to find someone in the future to duel with. In order to conduct duels, the number of deceived women like Lydia will increase.

I cannot ignore this.

As soon as Lydia recalled that she was deceived by magic, her chest pained at having hurt Edgar.

She felt a surge of anger at herself, and Lydia who had no choice and felt frustrated, stood up in determination.

"I will duel with him."

*

Kelpie transformed into his horse form, carried Lydia and galloped forward. No matter how fast he was, he found ways to not make Lydia fall off while running.

Although kelpies would generally never let humans sit on their back, Kelpie only allowed Lydia to do so.

They proceeded to the outskirts of the plains where the duel between Edgar and the armored man was going to take place.

The time and location was secretly investigated by Nico in the Earl's mansion.

Having heard Lydia threatening to duel him, Nico was of course, against it, but after having been tempted by food, he agreed to help.

“Lydia, are you sure you want to duel? Shouldn’t you reconsider?”

However, even Kelpie didn’t really agree with this either.

“Kelpie, please, if you don’t help me, I can’t fight on my own.”

Coblynau said that duels were conducted on horseback. Although Lydia never learned to ride a horse, she felt that she might be able to do it because she recalled that Kelpie was here.

“Well, if you ask me, dragging that guy down from the horse and making him surrender is very simple.”

He snorted, as if he felt little motivation.

“Then again, will it be alright using that kind of decorative spear as a weapon?”

There’s something else that has to be used in a duel.

After Lydia pondered about it, she took the decorative spear.

The fairies and the leprechaun worked together to take it out of Edgar’s mansion.

Mansions of aristocrats usually had gorgeous decorative weapons which actually couldn’t be used.

As a matter of fact, Lydia couldn't use weapons, so even if she took a decorative one, it didn't matter.

However, it was unexpectedly heavy. Lydia had to use both hands to hold the spear, but even this was very difficult. If the horse she was riding wasn't Kelpie, then she wouldn't be able to gallop with him like this.

However, when Lydia sat on Kelpie's back, regardless of how violent the swaying was, she felt as if she were sitting silently on a sturdy chair.

"Holding an ornament, the opponent will probably slack off as a result."

Lydia did not intend to wield this kind of thing.

"Kelpie, I'm really sorry, it was a difficult request for you to carry me and provoke the opponent's horse."

"You have to sit on my back, right?"

"Because if I don't pretend to be dueling, I feel like he wouldn't agree."

Yes, this duel was only a pretense.

"As soon as he falls from the horse, Coblynau will take off his armor. Since he's a mine fairy, he'll be able to use iron as he wishes. Next, the leprechauns will take off his boots quickly."

"This way, he will turn into dust."

"If he can return all the stolen things, he'll be able to return to the fairy realm. He will definitely choose to do so."

In reality, duels were a sacred matter, and needed to be one-on-one.

But the armored man had been deceiving women and was a thief. Lydia planned to finish the job as a fairy doctor.

This was in order to retrieve the leprechaun's treasures and to make the man return to where he came from.

This man practically wasn't worth dueling with. She just didn't want Edgar to be killed by such a person.

The reason why the pajamas were stolen was because Lydia was careless, but she was also bewitched, displaying an attitude of having a crush towards another man other than Edgar. Because she felt so much remorse from this, she was desperate.

"Princess, why have you come here?"

The armored man was sitting in the plains; it seemed that he was waiting there for several hours. Although there was a long time before Edgar would appear, perhaps he had nothing else to do.

He saw Lydia appear, then asked in a puzzled tone.

"I demand a duel with you."

".....I'm confused. I want to save you from the hands of the evil man."

"The leprechaun has told me the truth."

His armor made an clinking sounds as the man stood up on alert.

“Leprechaun? You can talk to fairies?”

He seemingly still didn't believe it. Indeed, leprechauns were regarded as a race among fairies that wouldn't interact with humans, moreover, it was unlikely that they would group together.

“I am a fairy doctor after all.”

“Oh... is that so? I found it quite strange that you weren't scared of a kelpie at all, so it turns out that the princess' reincarnation is a witch.”

Sure enough, tied to the armored man's arm was a strip of Lydia's ribboned linen.

“But princess, regardless of who you are in this world, you are still my princess.”

Was the magic still binding Lydia? When he called her princess, there was suddenly a disturbance in her chest, and her heartbeat went into a frenzy.

She took a deep breath.

I cannot be confused by magic.

It'll be alright as long as I persevere with my own thoughts.

“I am Lydia Carlton, I am neither the princess you loved at first sight nor a witch. Therefore, I cannot forgive the things that you've done. I should have the right to duel you!”

After Lydia said it in one breath, he seemed to burst into laughter from deep within the armor.

“Indeed, having both the horse and spear, this appearance seems to be quite impressive, but are there people who still duel in this way nowadays?”

Eh..... there isn't?

“But it doesn't matter, this is the way that I'm accustomed to in any case.”

He whistled, and a horse appeared from nowhere. At first glance, it appeared to be an ordinary chestnut-colored horse, but it probably wasn't a horse of this world.

In the fairy realm, there were many animals raised by fairies as livestock. This horse was probably raised by fairies.

“But princess, your horse is a kelpie, so it can't be considered as a fair competition, right?”

The armored man stroked the fairy horse's nose, while glaring at Kelpie.

“There is a fairy horse on your side as well. Regardless of speed or strength, it cannot be compared to the horses of the human world.”

“Hmph, but it can't be compared to me either.”

Kelpie quietly murmured.

“Or is it that even if the opponent is a woman, you're unwilling to use a small handicap?”

“Do you really want to duel?”

“You returned to this world for a duel, did you not? Even if the opponent isn’t the reincarnation of the lord that you detest, it actually doesn't matter, right? Do you have reason to deny my request?”

Lydia thought that he likely wouldn’t refuse.
However, he worriedly fell silent.

Then, he thoughtfully reached out and touched Lydia’s cloth of ribbons tied to his arm.

“Perhaps you don’t understand, but I truly love you, princess. I’m not playing mind games to get closer to you.”

“I am someone else.”

Saying those words to me is meaningless.

“The princess is no longer in this world, but I don’t want to accept this fact, as long as I can use magic to make other women believe themselves to be the reincarnation of the princess, I thought that I might be able to find a substitute.”

“You are too selfish.”

“Indeed, I also know that you won’t forgive me. So, what I’m saying for you now perhaps isn’t appropriate, but you really do resemble the princess, with your hair color and your unyielding stubborn disposition. Just for now, could you please be my princess?”

“Wha--what do you mean?”

The subject went in an unexpected direction, making Lydia panic.

But without knowing why, when Lydia listened to his comforting voice, her feelings of doubt and being unable to forgive him gradually diminished.

Even if she felt that it was due to the effects of magic, she couldn't think.

He slowly raised his hands to take off the helmet in front of Lydia, then he lifted his leather headscarf, revealing his shoulder length hair swaying in the wind.

Lydia had seen this in her dream; a plain-looking youth's face, smiling sadly.

Seeing his face again, Lydia's heart was disturbed once more.

"Can you forgive me as the princess...? Please kiss my forehead as proof."

"What? If you do this, you will be turned into ash."

"In the past, my wish was to win against the Lord in a match and obtain the princess, even if that desire is now impossible to achieve, and I still hoped to battle for the princess....I wanted to bet on my life, and let the princess, who no longer exists, know that my feelings toward her weren't a joke. So, if you are willing to forgive me for my crimes committed as the princess, I will no longer have regrets in this world."

Although Lydia was at a loss, she still climbed down from Kelpie's back.

"Do you really think so?"

"I vow to the Princess."

"Lydia, don't go to him."

Kelpie muttered.

"But he took the initiative to admit his sins and asked me to forgive him."

"Don't believe him, he might be plotting something."

"As long as my hand touches him, he will turn to ashes, so he shouldn't be able to do anything."

He took off his helmet and revealed his head, defenseless. Lydia thought, and was convinced that it should be alright.

If he wanted to atone for his sins, she hoped to show respect.

Nevertheless, Lydia still thought that, but was it because of the effects of magic that she was unable to make a proper judgement?

The man kneeled down, waiting for Lydia to come over, and she completely sensed that he had no will to fight.

"Kelpie, stay here."

She cautiously stepped forward, left Kelpie's side, and faced the man one-on-one.

(Hey, Lydia!)

Nico's voice rode the wind from somewhere.

(If the Earl finds out you kissed him on the forehead, things will be disastrous.)

"I just want to forgive him, be quiet."

(Ugh, it's too late. After speaking of it, Raven immediately reported this to the

Earl.)

What?

Where on earth was Nico?

Lydia turned around and heard the sound of hooves.

Someone riding a horse was coming towards here.

The group had three horses, riding the horse in front was someone with conspicuous blonde hair that could be seen in the distance.

“Edgar?”

There should have still been some time left before the duel.

Ugh, really, Nico must’ve tattled.

Just when she thought that, the armored man stood up.

“Lydia, hurry up and come back! Leave that guy!”

The moment Edgar’s voice passed through her ears, the man picked up the spear.

The spear flew towards Lydia, but she was unable to move.

Kelpie ran.

However, the spear approached Lydia’s eyes faster than Kelpie.

There wasn’t enough time to close her eyes as the spear suddenly issued a strong glare; it appeared to have shot above Lydia and emitted light, then disappeared.

“Lydia, are you alright?”

Lydia was relieved and just when she tried to turn around, she hit an invisible wall.

She hastily went around in a circle to confirm her other directions, but it was clear that she was surrounded in all directions.

“What’s going on.....?”

She couldn’t sense the wind blowing across the field at all, and could only hear the man’s voice.

“The dead witch collected a lot of magical supplies, which among those, some could also be used by amateurs.”

Edgar came running.

He tried to reach out to touch Lydia, but he was blocked by the invisible walls.

“It’s best not to force your hand past it, otherwise she will collapse along with that wall.”

The man said while picking up his helmet.

“Hey, to go as far as to lock me up as well, this bastard!”

The magic spear had probably shined on Kelpie too, as he seemed to be surrounded by invisible walls. Since he he was unable to smoothly turn his body around in his horse form, he transformed into his human form and incessantly went in circles around the narrow space.

Nevertheless, he was still different from Lydia, as he was a powerful fairy; he constantly shook the invisible walls from the inside.

“Before that kelpie destroys the magic, this could probably be settled. Let’s duel.”

The armored man faintly said.

“The winner can obtain her, that isn’t a problem, right?”

“Respect for a woman’s will is chivalrous. Regardless of whether you win or lose, Lydia will not choose you.”

“It’s hard to say.”

He touched the strip of linen tied onto his arm once more.

“The magic I casted will be completed when I win. She likely wouldn’t hesitate to fall in love with me, and promise to go to the fairy realm with me.”

How was that possible? Lydia muttered.

This was the true motive of that man.

He did not insist in dueling for the princess’ feelings, nor did he have any intention to apologize nor make amends, he just trying to find a girl who could replace her.

He wanted to use magic to bind their mind and body, and then replace the imprisoned princess.

Because he couldn’t return to the human world, he came to find a replacement for the princess to stay by his side.

He not only stole Lydia's pajamas, he had to duel with Edgar; this was all in order to complete the spell.

Therefore, the duel with Lydia had no meaning at all to him, and Lydia forgiving him as the princess was also insignificant.

However, it was already too late when she found out.

Lydia was like a hostage. Edgar was already incapable of stopping the duel.

I cannot reconcile with him and at the same time, I feel so humiliated. Lydia trembled as she looked up at Edgar.

Edgar moved his hand, stroking the invisible wall.

Lydia's ribbon was tied to his wrist.

The olive green ribbon that he untied out of his own accord at the opera house was an item directly worn by Lydia.

It was said that knights who fought for a lady would carry her handkerchief on their body.

Therefore, this was proof that Edgar was dueling for Lydia.

"Lydia, actually even if you do cease to be faithful, I do not intend to obediently back down... you know that."

"Edgar, I..."

Was he not angry?

"So, after I listened to Nico, I felt relieved. He said that the reason why you acted very strangely was all because of the effects of the spell, so your heart hasn't changed, has it?"

"I'm sorry..."

"I am the one to blame, I was not calm. I should've listened to you properly, then thought of ways to deal with the situation. Just because you might have been taken away by another man, my mind was in a mess."

He narrowed his eyes sadly.

"However, you don't have to worry, I won't let you change your heart."

".....Don't lose."

Lydia said.

She just simply hoped that Edgar would win.

Because it was dangerous to duel, instead of saving her, it was better for him to protect himself, compared to these thoughts, Lydia more so hoped that he would win.

She was Edgar's fiancée, all of her belonged to him. If this point could be proven, Lydia felt that even if her heart was distorted by magic, she would definitely love only Edgar in the future.